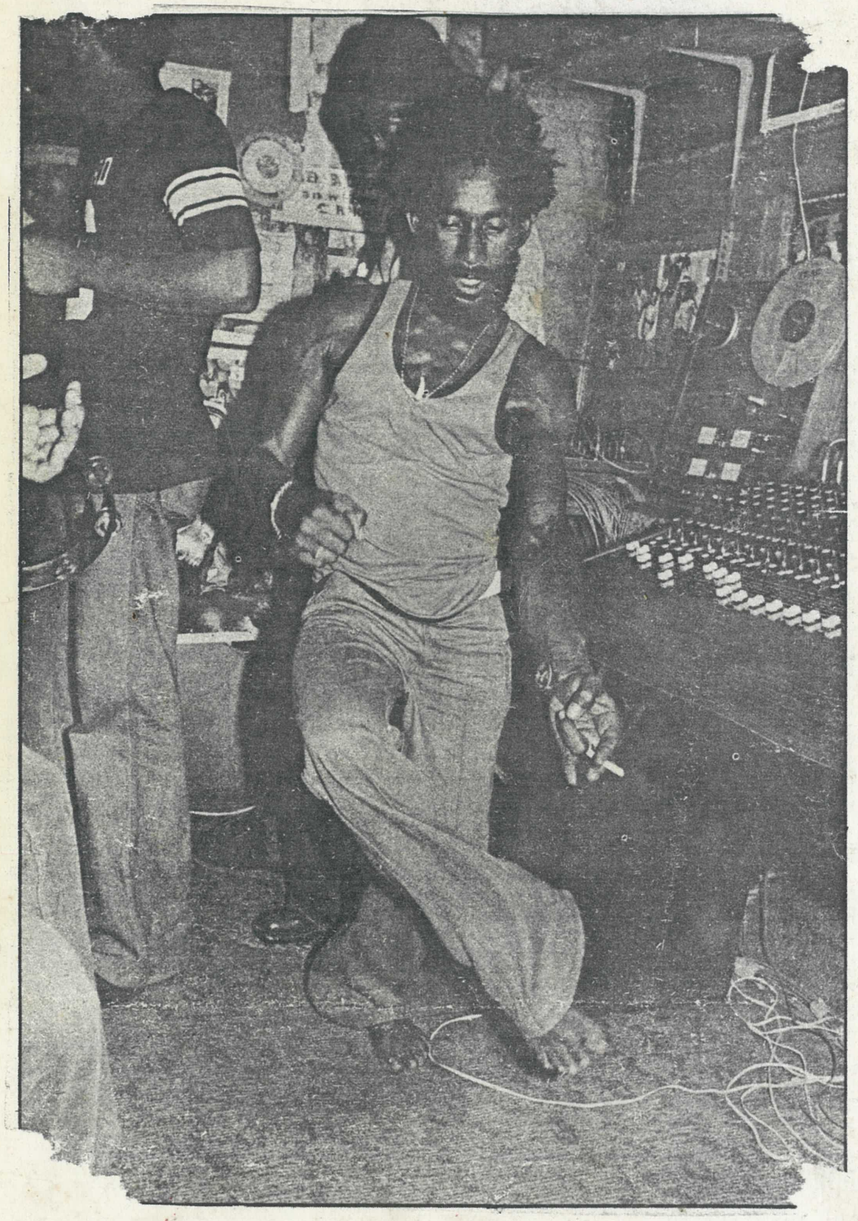
SUPER SCRATCH



The Life and Times of **LEE "SCRATCH" PERRY**

On the cover: mixing it up at BLACK ARK, circa 1976
Photographed by ADRIAN BOOT

SUPER SCRATCH

LEE 'SCRATCH' PERRY

Produced by SECRET HISTORY (Books) * April 1998

Reggae

"One good thing about music, when it hit you
you feel no pain."
(Bob Marley and the Wailers, Trench Town Rock*)*

Around 1968, the music shifted down another gear, becoming even slower and "heavier" with an even greater emphasis on the bass. The new rhythm was certainly there on Toots and the Maytals' hit *Do the Reggay*. But it can also be heard on a slightly earlier recording entitled *People Funny Boy*, which had been produced by Lee "Scratch" Perry. By this time Scratch had left Sir Coxsone Dodd's Studio One label and was striking out on his own. As far as he recollects, the idea of the reggae beat came to him as he was walking past a Pocomania Church:

> "... See, at them time, me used to go out town and stay late, drink some beer, thing like that. And one night me walking past a Pocomania church and hear the people inside a wail. And me catch the vibration and say, 'Boy! Let's make a sound fe catch the vibration of the people!' Them was in the spirit and them tune me spiritually. That's where the thing come from, 'cos them Poco people getting sweet!"

At the same time, Scratch wanted to break away from the ska and rocksteady rhythms which he felt were becoming too familiar and clichéd. Above all, he wanted to produce a sound which would "upset" his rivals, particularly Sir Coxsone Dodd:

> "'Cos they were doing something same all the way, man. All of them a just go 'ska-aska-ska-aska'. And when the people hear what I man do them hear a different beat, a waxy beat – like you stepping in glue. Them hear a different bass, a rebel bass, coming at you like sticking a gun."

The "waxy beat" and "rebel bass" proved a killing combination. And the reggae rhythms proved so popular that the word "reggae" now applies to virtually all forms of Jamaican pop. Scratch went on to produce artists like the Wailers, the Upsetters, U Roy, Junior Murvin and Max Romeo, and soon became the acknowledged master of heavy "roots" reggae.

from "Cut 'N' Mix" by Dick Hebridge 1987
(Lee Perry quotes are from Black Music 1977)

. . . at the grass roots of dub.

NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS

October 23rd, 1976

by
Neil Spencer

LEE PERRY'S diminutive four-year-old daughter is perched in the corner of his studio control room, utterly unconcerned by the colossal din clattering from the monster speakers above her head. I'm drooling with the excitement of witnessing a session by the famous Upsetters, fascinated by the sight of her father in action, but she's seen it all before. She knows her daddy is a magician.

There he is now, conjuring with switches, knobs, faders; mad scientist at the helm of his personal starship, Pisces fish swimming through seas of tape, wire, and sound. A small pert man whose hair appears to have a 240 volt current running through it, Lee Perry, alias Scratch the Upsetter, legend and veteran of the Jamaican music scene, works like no other producer or engineer I've seen.

For a start there's this constant movement; down to the studio to make adjustments to mikes and wires, and issue orders to musicians, back upstairs to set tapes rolling and bang on the glass between booth and studio and yell 'ROLLING' at the top of his lungs (amazingly there's no intercom), then the red light's switched on and Scratch is dancing at the controls of his console, arms swinging madly.

Or else he's sitting and unsitting on his stool, sipping water, ordering a son to bring in a bottle or two of Dragon Stout and shooing out a daughter. He's never still . . . Scratch . . . geddit? Suddenly he swoops on a pair of switches, knocking out the piano from the mix and bringing in a booming double echo on the drums and congas. He twirls more knobs, investing the action with all the drama of Doctor Strangelove throwing the switch on the Doomsday Machine. This time the guitar echoes uncannily and the hi-hat cymbal comes zipping in like a silver machete cutting through a dark jungle of rhythm before the slow fade out. Another great dub side from Black Ark studios bites the tape.

Today's sessions are for the backing tracks for a young singer name of Sam Carter who has a song called "Milit Y Ankee", which he informs me is Indian for "The First Time I Saw You", a title which hardly fits the ferocious uptempo rocker the Upsetters are threshing through. The vocals come later. If they're good then in a month or two Sam Carter might find himself with a monster hit on his hands, like Junior Murvin's "Police And Thieves" or the venerable Max Romeo's "War In A Babylon", to name but two of Scratch's biggest hit productions of the year.

Scratch at work in Black Ark.

It's a squat little studio is Scratch's Black Ark, situated behind his house in a pleasant but unexceptional tree lined suburban road, a trifle unlikely as the birthplace for some of the freakiest and most compelling reggae of the '70s. Scratch and his wife Pauline have been there since '72/73, about the time that Lee was producing Junior Byles on hits like "Beat Down Babylon" and "Place Called Africa", and the Upsetters — Scratch's session band, a name that remains constant while musicians change — were coughing up small masterpieces like "Clint Eastwood", "Enter The Dragon" and "Cow Thief Skank", the last of which I still consider one of the most bizarre musical excursions of the age. Laced by semi-random cut-ups (William Burroughs meets the rockers uptown) the rhythm section apparently consisted of lumps of scaffolding being manipulated in a deep hole while up top someone yelled obscenities about cow thieves and chopping off hands with machetes. Mind bending stuff.

But even while he was exploring the limits of his studio with craziness like this, Perry was tucking away more orthodox hits. He's recorded a bewildering variety of stuff: U. Roy, I Roy, Prince Jazzbo, The Wailers, Leo Graham, Susan Cadogan; the list goes on. Recently he's completed a reputedly dynamite album from The Heptones.

Then there are the incessant dubs that Scratch puts out under the Upsetters tag. These days he's retreated somewhat from the outer edge of "Cow Thief Skank", producing more subtle amorphous projections like the recent "Jah Lion" and "Super Ape" sets for Island. And then there was the strange battle he had with King Tubby on "King Tubby Meets The Upsetter At The Grass Roots of Dub" when the two pitted their engineering brawn against each other — one side each — to see who could mix down the most mind scrambling maze of dub from their respective consoles.

And before Black Ark? Well, you might remember "Return Of Django" from skin 'ead days back at the turn of the decade. That was when Aston and Carlton Barrett were the Upsetters' rhythm section, and Scratch was producing The Wailers, who'd signed up with him after their first attempt to launch their own record label (Wailin' Soul) had failed, sabotaged, so it's said, by record biz pirates.

Many of the songs on which Marley and the group went on to build their reputation sprang from their fertile stay with Scratch; "Trenchtown Rock", "Lively Up Yourself", "Soul Rebel", "Small Axe", and a host more. In some cases the more sophisticated re-recordings of this old material for the Island albums haven't caught the smoky intensity of the originals.

Since "Catch A Fire" they haven't worked together (with the interesting exception of "Jah Live", but Scratch is evidently proud of Bob and his success, and pictures of him cover the studio walls, vying for space with Bruce Lee and Scratch himself. Practically every pic shows Scratch at his console, the only place you're sure to find him: he has an apparently insatiable appetite for work.

Equally amazing is that all of this goes down on to either the four or the two track machine that are stuffed unceremoniously up the corner. I ask Scratch about the console rigging, unable to work out how many tracks are in use. "We only have use fe three track here," retorts Scratch impatiently. "That's the Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost. Maybe no-one tell you 'bout *dat*." Sure they did, Scratch, it's just that I never expected to find them working as tape ops in a recording studio. Later we give a lift to Pauline, Scratch's wife, and sons to deliver a bundle of new Upsetters singles, "Sufferer's Heights", down at Dynamic.

SPIKEY HEADS MEET DREADLOCKS

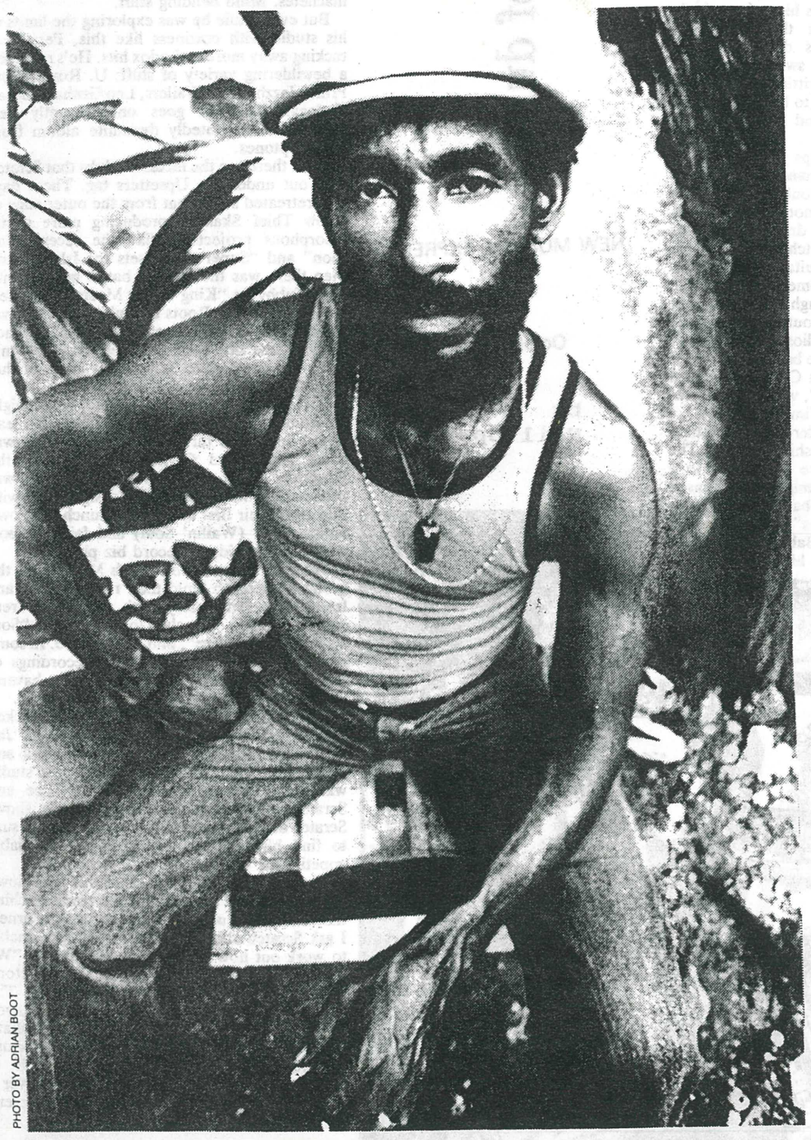


PHOTO BY ADRIAN BOOT

LEE PERRY WANTS to make one point clear. He's talking about the likely next Bob Marley single, an item entitled "Punky Reggae Party" that Perry is producing.

"We mix it down *deep* man," he yells, gesticulating. *"Deep! DEEP! DEEEPP!!"*

Jamaica's most idiosyncratic and prolific producer — who's also co-producer on the new Clash single — leaps to his bare feet and does a little dance round the room, pulling up his feet like they're glued to the floor with tacky Bostick.

"Deep!" he affirms. "Deep to the roots so it kinda mucky, so you can feel the slime on it."

He laughs, I laugh too. His enthusiasm is contagious, and I'm reminded of watching Perry at work at his Black Ark Studio, lodged on the outskirts of Kingston JA, 12 months previously. Perry brings to the mixing console the intuitive feel and passion that the best musicians bring to their instruments, and adds his own immense sense of humour. Leaping, dancing and shouting as he records, he flourishes faders like he was orchestrating the string section of a symphony orchestra, twiddles knobs like he was tuning a Stradivarius, mixes a dub with the ferocity of Townshend smashing a guitar. A flickering reggae dervish routine was also one of the highlights of BBC-TV's excellent recent *Roots Rock Reggae* documentary.

Lee Perry — aka Scratch aka The Upsetter — can't help it. He has to keep moving. A slight, wiry figure who positively crackles with a fierce but *ital* electricity, his is an impatient, restless spirit, his creativity insistent, nagging, a complete way of life.

Seldom out of the studio, the sheer volume of his work would be awe-inspiring if it were uniformly of his best. As it stands, it's merely staggering. "I can't keep it in here," he says, indicating his head and heart, "I 'ave to let it out. So whether you love it or not you 'ave to sympathise with me, I 'ave to put it out so something else can 'appen."

Even now he's converted his London flat-of-stay into a miniature studio. "You want to hear yourself?" he laughs halfway through our conversation and plays back the interview. Other visitors found themselves being video-taped for instant action replay on the colour TV that now shows a soundless kids' puppet programme.

Perry's in London by accident rather than design. En route to Nigeria to produce Island Records' Afro hope Eddie Quansah, delays in obtaining a visa here on top of the predictable delay in leaving Jamaica meant that by the time Scratch was finally ready to go to West Africa, it was damn near time to come back. Well, you know how it is when you're operating on Jamaican time . . .

Scratch found himself in London, with, amazingly for him, no clear business aims in view here; a perplexing state. "So it just pure talking me a do, pure interview. And me rest."

Well, not quite just talk and rest. For a start there was an apparently chance meeting with Bob Marley who also happened to be in town, while later The Upsetter could be found (or not) in a lesser known East End studio with The Clash.

PERRY AND Marley have had a thing going from way back. It was Perry who helped Marley and The Wailers set up their Tuff Gong Records back at the end of the '60s after the collapse of their first label, Wailin' Soul. He went on to produce some of the best Wailers' music — reggae music — ever: classic sides like "Trenchtown Rock," "Mr. Brown," "Duppy Conqueror", "Small Axe" . . . the list is so long.

Later, when the team split up, there was talk of some friction between them, as is usual between artist and producer in Jamaica, though Perry later took production credits on "Jah Live", Marley's stately elegy for Selassie. Perry, in fact, tells me that he's worked uncredited on all Marley's Island albums except "Exodus".

"People might have said things about the difference between me and Bob but it no' so. We 'ave a work we mus' do y'understand — *compulsory* job — so if Bob stay away a little while man might 'ave 'im own view but 'im interpret it wrong, because it's 'im that have the trouble and we 'ave none, dig."

Whatever, The Upsetter clearly feels the current re-union to be part of the grand design, and he's delighted at the musical outcome, the already notorious "Punky Reggae Party". Later I discover the lyric to this offbeat item is basically a recital of New Wave bands who will attend the party; *"The Wailers will be there, The Slits, The Clash, The Feelgoods . . . rejected by society, treated with impunity, protected by their dignity, it's a punky reggae party."*

"We done a cassette right here," Scratch says. "I gon' do the backing track in Jamaica, then maybe back to the States for the vocals . . .

"It's something big we going for. It will be like a *festival* when that song come out, everybody move to it. Sing and the whole world a sing the same song. What a *great* song that will be — 'Punky Reggae Party'!

"Me and Bob, we still ave fe go to a *deeper* depth because we 'ave to find the *'alf that never been told. Deep,* deep down . . ." he stares into my face, his eyes go a long way back. He leaps up. "Go find out all the lie them tell, find out the facts and expose it to the people," he declaims grandly.

Yeh, you and Bob been doing that a long time already Scratch . . .

"Yeah, but everytime we get close together to do that, evil force part us. But now that we know where the trick is — that the evil force part us because we expose too much of the truth — we stronger. When we're together we're the same powerhouse again."

THEN THERE was the collaboration with The Clash. "Great," said Perry when I asked him his opinion of The Clash's rendition of "Police And Thieves" (which Scratch wrote and produced for Junior Murvin) on their album. How he later came to meet the band and go into an East End Studio with them is already obscure: the meeting was "purely co-incidence," according to Clash manager Bernard Rhodes.

Whatever, Scratch is co-credited with regular producer Mickey Foote on the group's latest waxing "Complete Control", their lambast against centralised corporate decision making. It's an impressively proportioned opus, but to these ears there's scant that's Scratch about it beyond some tasty reverb on the vocals.

"I want to take the Jamaican vibration, the American vibration, the English vibration and combine it all together like a clock . . . tick tock tick tock . . . like a *rocket.*" He gives one of his hearty cackles. "Right now I'm surveying a new scene, I want to make use of the atmosphere when I get home. I'm recording it all up there now," he says pointing to his head.

So what do think to the atmosphere in London right now Scratch? It seems to be getting pretty downpressing . . .

NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS

October 1st, 1977

— Lee Perry

"SPIKEY HEADS" ... contd.

"Yeh man, it's a universal crisis. Everybody a feel it cos this is a tedious time. '76 was a *sipple* (slippery) year, but '77 is a *tedious* year."

Yeah, know what you mean Scratch.

In fact, Perry has already released a song called "Tedious" on Junior Murvin's "Police And Thieves" album, just as he released "Sipple Out Deh" — better known as "War In A Babylon" in this country — by Max Romeo last year. It's that and "Police And Thieves" that have made him probably the best known JA producer among rock audiences, though his pop chart successes here also include Susan Cadogan's "Hurt So Good", "Return Of Django" and the immortal "The Upsetter" itself from the days of the skinhead reggae craze.

"The Upsetter" was a big record for Scratch. Like several other of his records, it's a record of retribution, a musical retaliation for the way he felt he'd been treated by JA patriarch producer Coxsone Dodd and his Downbeat set-up for whom Perry had worked, since the primal days of the mid-'50s first as a sound system DJ, then as producer and artist, until 1968 when he left in fury.

Since '68 he's worked with just about everyone on the island, though his outstanding work has been with The Wailers, Junior Byles — with whom he cut the stunning "Beat Down Babylon" and epochal "Curly Locks"' and with The Upsetters, the shifting musical conglomerate that's his studio band and which at one time included the Barrett Brothers before they became fully fledged Wailers.

As an innovator he ranks second to none. Alongside King Tubby he's one as one of the originators of the dubwise style, and on tracks like "Cow Thief Skank" with its bizarre cut-up and effects and "Enter The Dragon" (Bruce Lee holds a particular fascination for Scratch) took Jamaican music to surrealist limits. "It's like when you make a movie and you make a scene where man always 'ave to laugh," he says about "Cow Thief". "Station Underground News" and "Bathroom Skank" were another pair of notables, this time with Scratch providing a whacky talk-over vocals.

All this time he was building up Black Ark to the self-contained unit it is today — a small bunkerhouse lodged literally at the bottom of his yard. "By '74 Black Ark in full operation and me 'ave everything me want," he relates. "the first thing me came up with is 'Hurt So Good', an international best seller."

LEE "SCRATCH" Perry, for example, almost certainly has no desire to settle permanently in Africa. After all, the record engineer / producer who, from his innocuous-appearing home in the Washington Gardens suburb of Kingston, is probably the vital chemistry man for the whole of both reggae music and reggae thought that doesn't come out of the mainstream commercial Kingston studios, regards Jamaica itself as a truly God-blessed land.

Before he graduated in 1968 to cutting himself singing the innovative "People Funny Boy" the now 39-year-old Piscean learned his craft after having long been a camp follower of Clement "Sir Coxson" Dodd's Downbeat Sound System in the late'50s to mid-'60s.

Dodd began to cut his own Studio One records and Perry, along with the famous American organist Jackie Mittoo, operated the production side of the label.

After parting from Coxson in 1965 Perry also worked with Joe Gibbs and Byron Lee.

By 1970 he was working with Bob Marley, Peter Tosh and Bunny Livingston — The Wailers — producing singles and two albums — "Soul Rebel" and "Soul Revolution", currently still available on Trojan as "African Herbsman" and "Rasta Revolution", and arguably far finer records than have been put out by any subsequent Wailers line-up.

Like an English neighbourhood butcher or baker might do, the slight, wiry Lee Perry lives next to the shop. Perhaps it's this accessibility to his work — his Black Ark studio is housed in a building in his backyard — that has made him one of the most influential, and arguably most talented, producer of reggae ever.

Though rates for his services are something in the region of 20 dollars an hour, Scratch himself has — of course — unlimited studio time. An ardent follower of the Rasta belief that physical fitness ensures clarity of mind, he rises early and first exercises rigorously, then puts in a few hours knob-twiddling before anyone turns up to be recorded.

Tales of his working speed are is being a painstaking perfectionist.

His studio is only four-track, with the sounds mastered on a Teac tape recorder, but then Scratch can work wonders: he is depicted on a mural just inside the door as "Lee Perry: The Mad Scientist", and it is surely not for nothing that Black Ark is called Black Ark, after the shipping line that was / is intended to return the Rastas to Ethiopia and liberty.

Currently, Scratch is working on the follow-up to his "Superape" LP — to be entitled, of course, "Return of Superape" — as well as recording an album with the diminutive, self-effacing melodica and keyboards maestro, Augustus Pablo, recorder of the classic 45, "King Tubby Meets The Rockers Uptown," among many, many others.

TWO MORE brief visits to 5a Cardiff Crescent later and the journalist arrives at 11.30 one Thursday morning for a formal rap session with Scratch.

A smouldering spliff sits in the ashtray. Scratch is wearing a splendid fawn cap, a white T-shirt and maroon swimming trunks, and is standing bare-footed up in the console room, almost imperceptibly shifting and switching knobs as he gives the distinctive Scratch treatment to "some young guys mekkin a try."

The console room is decorated in the Rasta colours of the Ethiopian flag — red and green on the walls with a gold carpet. The word "PEACE" cut in the red and green cloth covering the mixing desk gives an altar-like quality.

On the walls are assorted publicity stills of artists with whom Scratch has worked. One notes that someone has written the word "Judas" across the picture of Max Romeo. There's an Adrian Boot shot of The Clash in Belfast. There are also a selection of Bruce Lee stills from *Enter The Dragon,* plus an aerosol can of Cooper's Roach Spray.

At Black Ark you suddenly feel that the reason so much dreck emerges from UK and US studios is because they're so hermetically sealed. Unlike Scratch's place, they've managed to utterly isolate themselves from all the life-forces going on about them.

Anyway, finishing his work with Quake-In Vibrations, a five-piece group down from the country to lay down their first ever tracks, Scratch pauses to refresh himself with a bottle of Dragon Stout before settling down to give me "a reasoning."

Except that it isn't quite as simple as that. Also in the room is JBC morning DJ, John Wakelin — "one of me best bredren" — plus Candy Mackenzie and along with several unnamed faces, Cedric of The Congoes. It is time, Scratch has decided, that *he* should interview *me*. He must discover my aim and my purpose.

Certain of the people assembled, you see, have been most disturbed by what other writers have written. It goes further than Scratch's just being irritated by their "damn fool questions" about details of his life. Peter Simon's *Reggae Bloodlines,* for example, apparently has a condescending tone about it which those present find highly distasteful.

In particular John Wakelin is disturbed about what he considers its superficial, derogatory treatment of Ras Michael, a man who deserves respect.

"Certain foreign correspondents come here and perpetuate this action and after a while we lock the door," says John.

Scratch turns to him. "Why some of them have to criticise it," he sighs, "is because they don't understand it. To understand it you have to overstand it."

"It ain't a passin' fad," John tells me, "and man have to go into it and see what it is all about."

A lot of printed word myths about Jamaica seem to have been created, I say, in which the country seems to be populated by a race of cartoon characters.

"Because they don't know where to look," nods Scratch, almost to himself. "Because the place to look for this thing is *beyond* the scene." about the concept in Europe and the States of The Promotional Interview.

"But it's a different premise," John Wakelin's soft voice tells me, "that operates in different parts of the world. Down here people don't always want you to come and write about them."

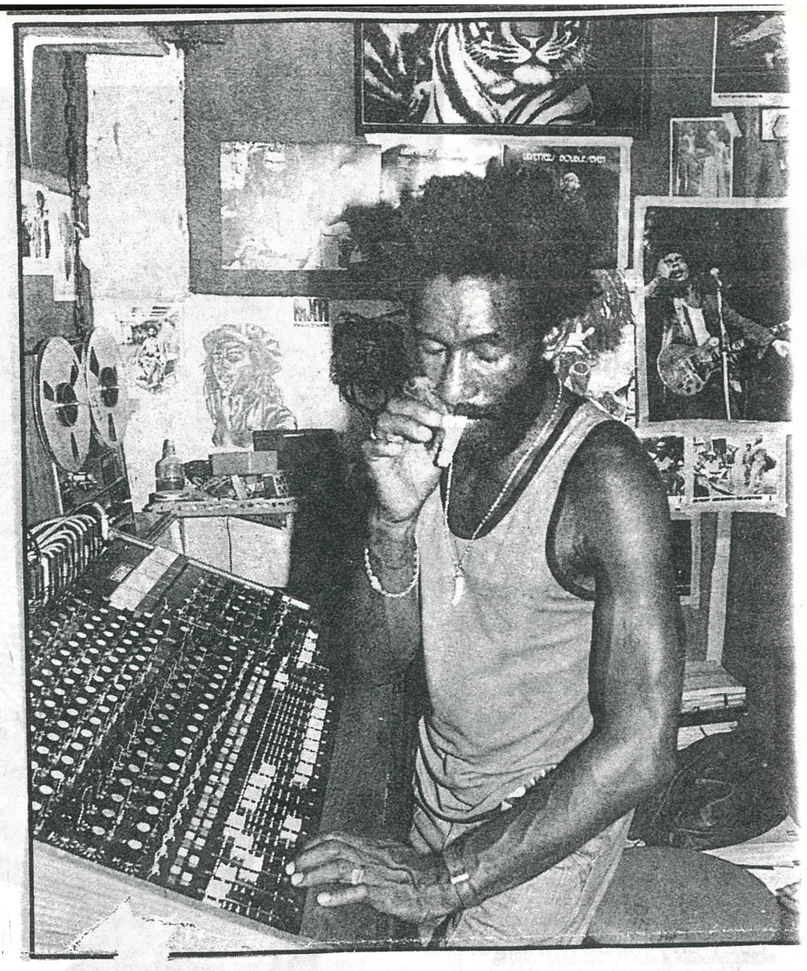
The DJ is suspicious of the manner in which reggae is treated by the US and British radio networks.

"The point at issue here," he continues, "is that the very elements in reggae music denouncing the very *heart* of the system on which much of the capitalist world is built is perhaps an integral reason of the radio hold-down. But even the press finds it hard to touch that reason. Because true reggae music is pure protest music . . ."

With almost religious fervour, but with warmth that is pure passion in his voice, Scratch interrupts. "I and I," he paces the floor waving a finger, "is to warn them that the bomb going to blow up on them that makes it!! I and I is here to warn them that if they use it then them *dead* by it, too.

"So our part is to make sure that reggae music take the message across to the warriors in the war zone whom you can't reach by the telephone. If it gets to him on a gramophone him must hear it.

"And *this* am the message of reggae music!



NEIL SPENCER

NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS

May 27th, 1978

22nd September,

1984 New Musical Express

PUT THIS IN YOUR PIPE, COCK!

LEE PERRY

Presents Megaton Dub 2 *(Seven Leaves)*

A NEW Lee Perry (aka Scratch aka The Upsetter and, more recently, aka Pipecock Jackson!) collection is akin to coming in from the cold: the warm, deep, underwater pulse that snakes in and out of the rhythms – the mark of the master.

Before you addicts go rushing down to the Dub Vendor let me add that what we have here is what we have come to expect these last few years: something old, something new, something distinctly reminiscent of places we've been to before.

Lee Perry's back pages form a labyrinth of dubscapes to which he seems forever drawn back: a few touches here, another brushstroke there. 'Fisherman Dub' revisits The Congos' 'Row Fisherman Row' gem, a song already indelibly stamped with Scratch's signature but here fragmented, dissembled and rebuilt anew.

On the slow insidious 'Groovy Dub' the tone is distinctly unsettling, a dark secret lurking in every echoed drumbeat and a shifting, ghostly undertow. Sometimes one wonders – is Perry composing soundtracks for the various dread, ganga-induced visions that flit through his brain? Whatever, these fragments from a continuous, circular work-in-progress are compelling stuff for us faithful.

If you already have the classic 'Scratch On The Wire' album (an *essential* record for any dub collection or anyone interested in the hypnotic, disorienting power of certain soundscapes) and you buy this you'll find that 'Big Neck Dub' is a dub version of 'Big Neck Policeman'. Now, who else but Scratch makes dub versions of dub versions!

Along with Holger Czukay, Lee Perry doesn't always know (care?) where he's going but he has a lot of fun getting there.

– Sean O'Hagan

When Lee Perry – aka Scratch, aka The Upsetter – burned down his Black Ark studio, many people thought he had finally flipped his lid. But now he's back, with a new LP, a new studio and a vengeful plan to bankrupt Island Records – whose villainy, he claims, brought about his past madness. Danny Kelly takes a schizo-reading on the man who invented dub and made Bob Marley famous.

WHEN THE sprawling, jagged, beautiful, wicked history of popular music is definitively assembled, the name of Lee Perry will be writ large.

If his sole achievement had been to engineer Doctor Alimantado's 'Best Dressed Chicken In Town', a tune that fired the pimply imagination of John Lydon, he would have been entitled to a line at least.

Or if he had only been the co-producer of The Clash's fiercesome 'Complete Control' he'd have deserved a small paragraph.

But Perry was also the man behind some of the greatest records ever made, reggae or otherwise. *And* the poultics that drew the latent genius of Robert Nesta Marley to the surface. *And* the brains, ears and hands that helped create dub, an innovation that altered the sound, the very possibilities, of black music as surely as Leiber and Stoller's inspired orchestral drenching of The Drifters' 'There Goes My Baby' or the white-coated circuit-board wiz who gave solderedlife to a micro monster and called it DMX.

In truth, the felling of all the forests of Scandanavia couldn't produce enough pages to do justice to the wondrous art of Lee Perry.

And yet, on one hazy Jamaican morning in 1980, this amazing man made an effort to write himself out of that history. He destroyed his fabled Black Art studio, his tiny haven of creativity that had become a torture chamber to him.

Perry's legendary eccentricity appeared to have spilled across the invisible line into full scale insanity.

Since then all we have heard are rumours, spread, he claims, by his enemies, of continued madness, some third-hand quotes (some pitiably said, others laced with acidic anger) after the death of Marley, and a series of reworked rhythms put out on compilations by the miniscule Seven Leaves Records in North West London, welcome but nonetheless faded echoes of former glories, dusty crumbs from a table once groaning with bounty.

But now the Lee Perry legend may be on the verge of resurrection. An all-new record ('History, Mystery, Prophesy') has appeared in America and the genius is holed up in London, planning, scheming, plotting and ranting, preparing to tour and, joy of joys, to produce more new music . . .

Having tracked him down amidst the suburban bustle of Kensal Green, initial contact with Perry is disturbing. He is wearing a straw hat, a sequinned shirt and a woman's cardigan. His small, wiry, 48-year-old body is incredibly fit, used to Kung Fu kicks way above head height. A video camera records my movements until the batteries run out. And throughout the interview, Perry thumbs the pages of a large book (about Marcus Garvey actually) and writes a selection of the words and phrases that I speak to him in large biro capitals across the dense text.

But all these things are mere eccentricities, really. In conversation he is lucid, articulate and abrim with opinion. A torrent of language (punctuated with catch phrases, buzz words, references to the elements and martial arts gestures) issues from him, some of it pertinent and clear, some babble in unearthly tongues. He is currently obsessed with Island Records, or rather their head Chris Blackwell, who he feels has done him wrong.

HISTORY

"MY FATHER worked on the road, my mother in the fields. We were very poor. I went to school, first in Kendal, then in Green Island, 'til fourth grade, around 15. I learned nothing at all. Everything I have learned has come from nature.

"When I left school there was nothing to do except field work. Hard, hard labour. I didn't fancy that. So I started playing dominoes. Through dominoes I practised my mind and learned to read the minds of others. This has proved eternally useful to me.

"After that I was getting to be a big lad so I decided to get a proper job. I became a builder, a driver of bulldozers. I liked the power! That BRRRRRRR from nine 'til six. BRRRRRRR from the engine up the gearstick and into your arm. It builds up lots of power. The tractor driving filled Lee Perry with superpower!"

Fuelled with "superpower" drawn from large internal combustion engines and what he describes as "miracle gifts, blessing from God", young Lee made his way to Kingston, a city of sharks and wolves. He infiltrated the peripheries of Clement 'Coxsone' Dodd's sound system and record label, first as a glorified teaboy, late as a fully fledged disc spinner.

A victim of the violence that accompanied the sounds of Dodd's renowned business sense, Perry's lifelong hatred of his employers started in those heaving dancehalls and dingy studio sessions.

"Coxsone never wanted to give a country boy a chance. No way. He took my songs and gave them to people like Delroy Wilson. I got no credit, certainly no money. I was being screwed."

In these mid-'60s days, Perry worked in the Federal studios before it went bust and the West Indies studio before it became Dynamic Sound. In the latter he organised a work now, pay later, session for himself and cut the record that freed him of Dodd's yoke.

'People Funny Boy' (a vitriolic attack on his former guvnor) was "cut on the Monday, mastered on the Tuesday, out on the Wednesday and a hit by Friday". 'People' opened ears to Perry's talent as an idiosyncratic vocalist and, crucially, as an organiser of sound. His reputation as a producer/engineer was *made*.

THE UPSETTER, THE TUFF GONG AND THE ROOTS OF DUB

BETWEEN 1968 and 1974 – the period in which another bout of vinyl revenge gained him The Upsetter handle – Perry worked incessantly. In this country his productions were issued on dozens of labels. Over 100 cuts, often spiky instrumentals, were issued as singles on Trojan's 'Upsetter' subsidiary. Some, like 'The Return Of Django', were even pop hits. And it was during this maelstrom of creativity that he tapped the muse of Bob Marley and helped unleash dub on an unsuspecting world.

The Perry/Wailers union yielded two classic reggae albums (available currently as 'Rasta Revolution' and 'African Herbsman') and brought Marley, and to some extent Perry to the attention of Island Records supremo Chis Blackwell.

How did he partnership with the Honourable Marley come about?

"The Wailers had worked with Coxsone at Studio One but it had not worked out. The group had split up and Bob had gone to America with Danny Simms to do the Johnny Nash thing. But Nash didn't want to promote Bob, just to pick his mind. When he came back to Jamaica he asked me to work with him.

"I liked him as a person and so I said OK. To be honest, everytime we recorded together it was something magical, almost too powerful, too strong.

"We worked like brothers 'til Chris Blackwell saw it was something great and came like a big hawk and grab Bob Marley up."

Island's signing of Marley, Peter Tosh and Bunny Wailer was painful enough. Misery was heaped on woe for Perry when two of his house band, bassist Aston Barrett and brother drummer Carlton went with them to form the new, self-contained Wailers.

"Was Bob who organised that, with Chris Blackwell's money. They took away my musicians. But I don't get vexed with Aston or Carlton because money talks very loud. Aston still checks me every day."

Despite this wrench, Marley returned to Perry throughout the '70s, at times for advice, at times to collaborate ('Jah Live', 'Punky Reggae Party' and 'Rastaman Live Up').

At the same time as nursing Marley's talent to shimmering, militant fruition, Scratch Perry was also starting to experiment with technical trickery and sound effects in his instrumental work. Along with Osborne Ruddock (King Tubby) he is credited with creating the musical mindscramble we now know as dub.

"To be fair and speak the truth, it wasn't I and Tubby who brought about dub, but I alone! In those days Tubby had a sound system and he wanted dubs for it from me. He'd come to Randy's studio where I worked at the time and spend days watching me messing about with the controls. As my dubs got famous and people like them, so Tubby try mixing up a few sides of his own."

Now that, Lee, sounds like a likely story. Still, how had the idea of dub come about in the first place?

"We liked to record the drums and bass first, to get them perfect. The other instruments would be put on afterwards. But sometimes the rhythm track would be so fucking perfect that we'd forget about the other parts and just play about with the drum and bass."

"So what started as a technical thing became a creative thing. I'm so good at it because I've got great ears!"

BLACK ARK, GOLDEN YEARS

BY 1974, Perry had accrued enough money to open his own studio and record label. Based primarily at the botton of his garden, he called his studio the Black Ark.

A claustrophobic four track set-up, it was from here that for six years welters of the best reggae, of the best music *ever made*, sprang. Scratch, barefoot, in shorts, a spliff ever draped from the corner of his mouth, would skip, hop and whirl, and move his hands over the console like a spell caster or a faithhealer. And onto the cold tape would fall showers of magic.

The sound achieved in the Ark was unique. The music was springy and light, as though it had been dabbed gently onto the vinyl, like kisses. At a time when other studios were making passable dub impressions of steamhammers getting to work on massive chunks of concrete, the Ark dubs were often spidery constructions of lacy delicacy. Some, like the dub of Keith Rowe's 'Groovy Situation' were ethereal, threatening to evaporate before the needle reached the run-off. Others, Murvin's 'Crossover' for instance, were demented soundscapes like none heard before, and seldom since. Almost all this music was brilliant.

And, in a genre dominated by 45s, Perry forged classic albums: dub ones by The Upsetters ('Super Ape' and its sequel 'The Return . . .'), and vocal ones by Max Romeo ('War In A Babylon'), Junior Murvin ('Police And Thieves'), George Faith ('To Be A Lover') and The Congoes ('Heart Of The Congoes'). Almost as astonishing as the sheer volume of irresistible music that was emanating from Perry's mind was its breadth.

The Congoes record, along with The Abyssinians' 'Forward On To Zion', is the most uncompromisingly spiritual of popular reggae, while Faith's disc focuses on the heart's business and the messy pleasures of the flesh. Scratch finds no conflict in this.

"Most certainly not. God is sex! If there was no sex, we would die, and with us would die truth and religion. God loves sex."

What kind of producer are you?

"I expect artists to do exactly as I say. I teach them everything. How to play, how to move, everything. I am a dictator!"

There's not much evidence of the dictators sound on the track he produced for The Clash.

"That is true. But when I got involved with that record, most of it was already done. I liked The Clash, they were nice boys, I taught them to turn down their guitars in the studio." He covers his ears. "They were *loud,* man, loud!"

And I notice, Mister Dictator, that none of your acts ever made a *second* album with you.

"That was caused by the thief Blackwell", he claims. "He never paid me for the way them records sell in Britian so I can never work again with them artists. Cha . . . that man is a parasite . . ."

MYSTERY AND THE LOST YEARS

PERRY NOW sees his black despair at what he regards as mistreatment by Island as the major cause of his seemingly inexplicable destruction of the Black Ark. Whether invented or real, his recollections of those desperate events are cut-glass clear. His account is given in a detached monotone, without traces of sadness or regret.

"For weeks and months the pressure had been building up. I was getting no money, just pressure, pressure, pressure. I got up that morning with turmoil in my heart and went to the bottom of my garden, the studio, y'know. I love kid's rubber balls. They are air, trapped. I love that and I collect many of these balls. Anyway, I have one favourite, it came from America and I kept it on the mixing desk. Some one had taken it when I got to the studio and I was just filled with anger. First all the pressure, the thievery, and then this . . ."

What did you do?

"I destroyed the studio. I smashed it up and then I burnt it down. Over."

How did you feel the next day when you looked out and saw not a place of work but a heap of ashes?

"I felt I had done the manly thing, that I had stood up for what I believe in. I was cleansed and relieved. No one could rip me off any more. Not Chris Blackwell, not anybody."

But, Lee, this does sound exactly like the actions of a madman, nothing more, nothing less.

"I *was* mad. In my heart. But not in my mind. I have never been physically mad."

Taking the above events into account, that's probably a statement open to serious questioning. My own feeling is that Perry, by societal norms never a candidate for Mr Sanity, probably did flip his lid and is now applying retrospective logic to this actions.

Those actions forced him into the wilderness for four long years, the prophet without honour in his own land, without a studio but *with* a reputation that precluded rehabilitation.

Whatever his mental state then or now, his loathing of Chris Blackwell has become an all-consuming motivational force. One of the reasons for Scratch's re-emergence is a desire to play out his vendetta with Island.

"I was going to beat Blackwell up. I could, easily. But I have decided to bankrupt him instead, to see Island in the gutter and the vampire a pauper. Every time Island has a hit record, I will produce a better version of it. I will ruin that company!"

That could be a tall order, Island are a big business, with incredible facilities and acts like Black Uhuru.

Perry's voice cracks into a wild cackle. "Uhuru guru schmuru! I don't care who they have, I will do it. That is definite, confident, without qualification.

"You know, that Chris Blackwell disgusts me, makes me want to vomit. He invited me to the opening of the Compass Point studio in Nassau and there I saw him drink the blood of a freshly killed chicken. He thought I was into all that voodoo and obeah (African magic for inflicting damage on enemies, much feared in the Caribbean) stuff, and offered me some. It was disgusting."

I hate to be a contradictory cuss, but we are talking about the same Chris Blackwell aren't we, y'know, the internationally-respected business man?

"Yes, yes, yes!" The knotty dubmaster is insistent. "I, Lee Perry, will swear that before any judge, solicitor or barrister he could employ."

There you have it, Perry's side of the story.

A further illustration of the depth (again the bounds of rationality are being stretched) of his disaffection with Island is illustrated by the fact that he turned down the opportunity to produce no less a mob than Talking Heads, despite taking to David Byrne in a big way, because he thought that the Heads were on the label, instead of just using the Compass Point facility.

The Lost Years, a sad and tragic waste.

PROPHESY

SO WHAT of the future?

In Perry's favour there is at least a stability in his home life. He lives in Kingston with his three grown up offspring, a car and two video players. He has spent the dark ages writing — "on books, walls, stones, anywhere" — and exercising — "exercise and Buddah, that's my recipe". He seems to have his once monumental drink problem under control. What about drugs?

"If I take drugs I will be unfit and unable to speak to the people because when I speak, it would be the drugs talking. But I will take herb from morning 'til night. I will smoke it, eat it and drink it! But cocaine is bad for the body, and I *love* my body!"

The Upsetter, in his own highly unqualified opinion, has never been in better physical fettle and, his ridiculous and ugly plan to deal with Island notwithstanding, is ready to record again.

Plans are afoot for the building of a new studio on the site of the Black Ark and he's working with — and here's one for your scrapbook — Linda McCartney on a project started many years ago but that was stalled by the Perry problems. In London this month he has recorded with Neil Fraser, the engineer at Ariwa studios whose work as the Mad Professor has established him as *the* British reggae producer. This is a master/apprentice relationship as fascinating in prospect as watching Method babies De Niro, Pacino, and Duvall kneel at the feet of Papa Brando in *The Godfather*.

Listening to Perry talking about his schemes and knowing the, ahem, unpredictability, of his past, it's hard to be anything but sceptical, but Neil Fraser, as sane as his records are loonie, is a reassuring voice amidst the doubts.

"The little bits of work we have done have been really fantastic. The man is back and doing it. I think he's ready."

So convinced is Fraser of this that he's now slated in for mixing desk duty when Perry takes to Britain's halls in the near future.

The ball is in motion but it really is too early to say whether this dotty, angry, electrified bundle of creativity, a man not really with us half the time, can complete what would be a remarkable comeback, a second coming. He won't fail for lack of confidence.

"I am the best record producer that Jamaica has seen. Many say that I am the best in the world!!"

From the shambles of a brilliant, wasteful, bitter and possibly insane past, Scratch may still be genius enough to prove that. For people like myself that have lusted after his work there is the comforting thought that where there's life . . . .

LEE PERRY
The Upsetter Box Set *(Trojan)*

HEREIN THREE Upsetters' LPs from the period '72 to '74: 'Africa's Blood, the extremely rare 'Rhythm Shower' and the better known 'Double Seven'. As with anything bearing the man's maverick touch we are dealing with a very mixed bag which, to some degree, provides an insight into a watershed period in Perry's development. These recordings are from the time just post the early, seminal Upsetters' singles reign that began in '69 and just pre the mid'70s excursions into the realms of dub unreality.

'Africa's Blood' gets things underway with a large quotient of those soul based instrumentals complete with distinctive Booker T organ sound and a snappy, ska-charged backbeat. Bunny Wailer's 'Dreamland' and Eric Donaldson's 'Cherry Oh Baby' emerge more or less intact but an invigorating reading of Junior Byles' 'Place Called Africa', complete with Doc Alimantado toast, reveals the strongest clues as to Perry's direction.

'Rhythm Shower' has the mighty Dillinger in full flow on 'Connection' and the propulsive 'Tighten Up' which, incidentally, gave its name to the Trojan series that did so much to popularise this music back then.

A young Augustus Pablo flits through 'Kuchy Skank' but the pioneering spirit of the master is writ large over the final track, 'Operation'; a gloriously mischievous juxtaposition of two separate rhythms, the familiar slowed down pulse and the sound of a police siren passing by the studio.

Finally 'Double Seven', as much a rag bag as the rest but featuring some early synthesiser work in the inimitable Scratch style, a fried chicken homage on 'Kentucky Skank', U Roy and I Roy competing for the talkover crown and the very fine voice of David Isaacs which melts the heart on the lovers magic of 'Just Enough'. All in all, an early apprenticeship for the great mid '70s phase where Perry transformed dub music once again and made some of the best lovers reggae around with the likes Keith Rowe and the aforementioned George Faith.

Sean O'Hagan

BLESSED BY A BANANA SPLIT

By Doug Wendt

THE BEAT vol.6 #4, 1987

Lee "Scratch" Perry, the Upsetter, is the key man and the key stone in reggae music. He is the singular figure from early Coxsone days who has kept and set the pace ever since. He has found talent, produced and engineered it, and still found time to keep up a long and glorious solo career with his own immense vocal and writing talents. Many claim that Bob Marley actually sounds more like Lee Perry than anyone else. And there are solo tracks by both men where it's hard to tell them apart.

Marley may be gone but Lee Perry rushes on toward his 30th year in reggae music with no signs of slack or pulled punches. In fact, Lee's killer instinct seems even more finely honed in 1987 with two massive releases to rival his finest accomplishments — a remixed version of "I Am A Madman" (Trojan U.K. 12") and a fully realized new album, *Time Boom De Devil Dead* (ON-U Sound U.K.).

Taken from last year's spectacular *Millionaire Liquidator/Battle of Armageddeon* lp, "I Am A Madman" brings another acknowledged loony into the fold, the Mad Professor, to turn Scratch's signature tune into a masterwork that's double-mad. Sure, Perry has developed a deserved reputation for dementia, especially over the last decade; however, this self-professed Wonderman and Super Ape who wants to hijack Earth has more in common with, say, George Clinton, Frank Zappa or John Lennon than any psychotic or neurotic. Perry is of this earth. It's just that he sees the world at a higher standard than Babylon will allow. And he's mad as hell and crazy that more don't care. With a wide-eyed wink and a banana split's blessing, Scratch proudly proclaims that he *is* a madman.

The footwide 45 immediately pulls one in with its haunting, aching ambience highlighted by the crucial addition of the mighty melodica. The Mad Professor (with an assist by editor Patrick Meads, Trojan's "Man with Blade") keeps it simple, sparse and lean, letting Perry's imagery bubble on autopilot on top.

Born in the country, born in the young tree, Kingston, Jamaica, Hanover / Shaking hand with lightning, shaking hand with thunder, riddim from the earth / I don't deal with ruckus, I am a countess, I am a frontess, I am a madman, I am a badman / Truth is taking over, liars run for cover, I I I I I was blessed by a split, banana split / My face is a mirror, I see everything with my mystic eye / I am a madman, come to cool the bad ones.

Deep organ and horns intertwine as the days, months and years take over. Then the rain, breeze and trees move in as the vocal ends and the "Yam yam yam yam," almost Popeye-like chant signifies the dub's delivery for a melodica workout inside a cavernous cauldron that oozes steam from the speakers. Scratch chants "I I I I I" like the final episode of tv's *The Prisoner*, where the entire jury cracked like puppets in judgment. Echoes speak and squeak as Perry demands, "hand over the five dollars," the face value of this righteous 12". At Lee Perry's garage sale it's been marked at its mind value — over a million, a liquidation price and wise investment.

The flip side of "Madman" is another Mad Professor remix, this one of "Merry Christmas, Happy New Year," which was originally released a year before and which also showed up in the more generic, seasonless version called "Happy Birthday" on *Battle of Armagideon*. This time we "ring the armagideon in" with another crucial melodica overdub to make it even more fetching. The "Perry Christmas Dub" follows with Lee giving the knobs a shove. Hotter than July.

Then there's the match made in Zion. Yes folks, it's true: Dub alchemist Adrian Sherwood, the 29-year-old founder and producer of Hit Run and ON-U Sound records, has just taken his African Head Charged style and wedded it with Lee Perry's brilliance in the just-unleashed, co-produced masterpiece, *Time Boom De Devil Dead*. Backed by the Dub Syndicate (whose lineup looks like a revamped Roots Radics with Style Scott, Flabba Holt, Bingy Bunny and Deadly Headly contributing heavily), this album is more than what everyone dreamed for when word first spread that Perry and Sherwood were in the studio last fall. EMI has already inked a distribution deal for the next pressing so that the ON-U version in a limited run will become an instant collector's item. Small wonder when one penetrates the depth of this lp.

Sherwood's dub forest has always been thick and drenched in life-giving nutrients. His mixes manage to convey a wall of sound that make Phil Spector's efforts seem like a picket fence. Sounds come from every direction, from under the earth and above the clouds. When you add Adrian's third-dimensional aural onslaught to Perry's fourth-dimensional mind warp you get reggae in the seventh dimension. No one can touch it.

Riding on the edge of oblivion, I reign dominion, sings Scratch on the opening track, "SDI." Then he chants *I slew the IMF, I slew the CIA, I slew the KGB, I slew SDI*, like John Lennon's "I don't believe . . ." litany in "God"; but here Scratch *destroys* what he doesn't enjoy. Back and foreground speakers re-enforce the notion that all these means of collective suicide and sanctioned madness keep Upsetter and us walking right on the edge. Then the dub trapdoor drops. Watch out, gringo: *SDI is the biggest fraud we've ever known*.

Lee grunts intro of laws and wants to know, "What are you defending, mate" to lead off the first autobio-grandiose-aphy statement on *Time Boom* . . .

Next Perry coughs up fire/water with a native time boom, glory to holy ghost, black magic velocity. Gringo Perry, the Voice Of Africa, chuckling "Jungle." Deep jungle, like that surveyed by Super Ape sound circa '76-'78, all dreadful and haunting, superfate phase shift, bubbling bullets blazin'. Hear Sherwood praise with twist-knob tribute to the best Upsetter era. It's co-produced so it's Jah X, Pipecock Jaxson, Tic Toc Teac, Wizzy Wizzy, Abraham Perry, Amigo, Scratch actually *on* the wire again. Horns wail, thunder rollin' on the river, proud Perry's big wheels keep on turnin', burnin' brass bristling, smokestacks' blacker than dread. "Jungle" is another major highlight and this lp is only three tracks old. It's starting to feel like it was 20 years ago today, Sgt. Perry taught the band to play. Except on "another 1992 ON-U Sound production," we're always years ahead so the time warps and the sound envelopes, "Rastafari sez the cat." Bill "Lee" Shears buries the razor. Time dispensation. Roar. Lightning flash. Tit for tat.

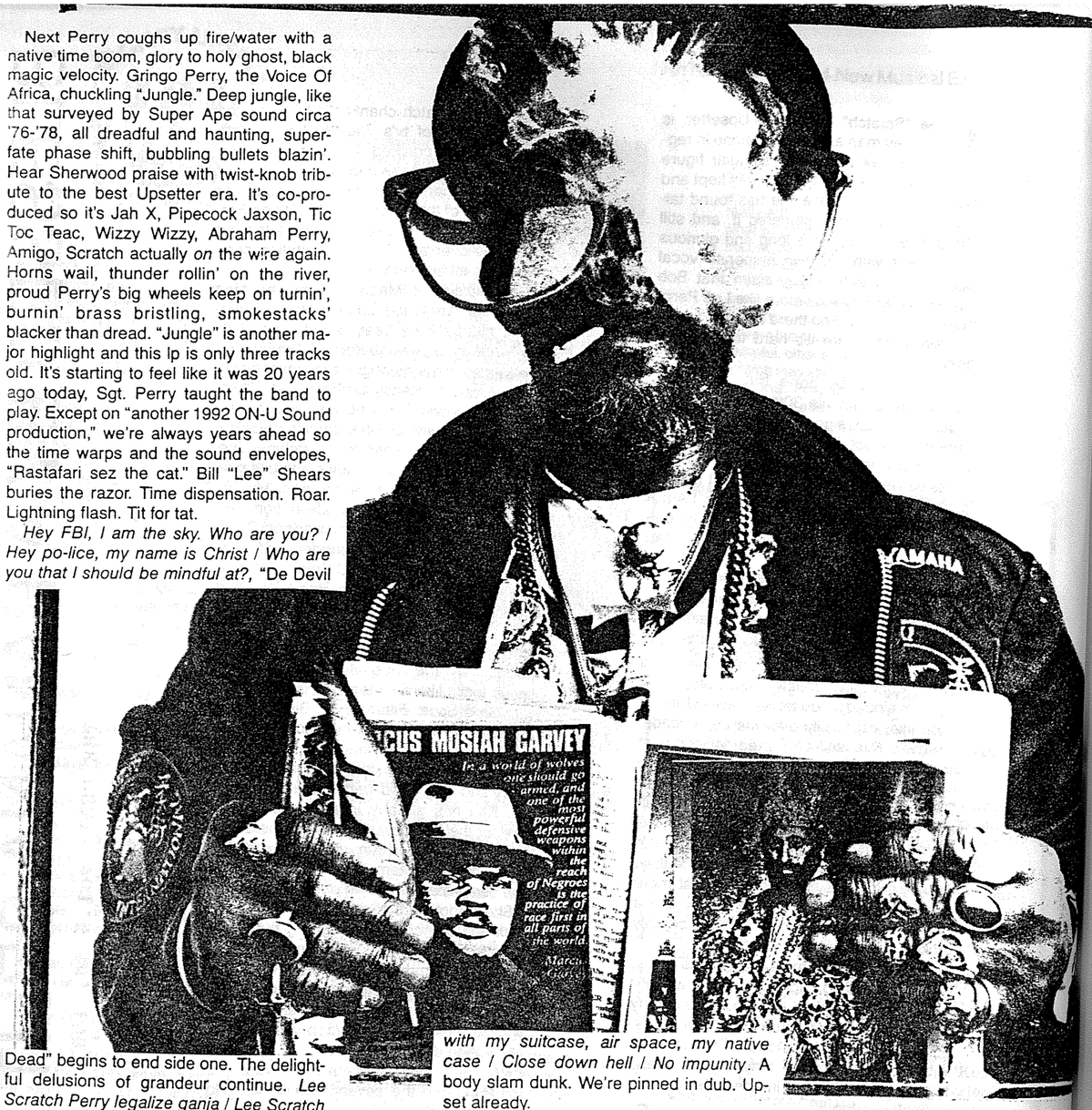
Hey FBI, I am the sky. Who are you? / Hey po-lice, my name is Christ / Who are you that I should be mindful at?, "De Devil Dead" begins to end side one. The delightful delusions of grandeur continue. *Lee Scratch Perry legalize ganja / Lee Scratch Perry legalize cannibis globally / This is your captain speaking / Don' think I'm crazy / Don't think I am insane / I Commandant came*. You win! Hijack Earth! *De Devil dead, HalleluJah, Lord a Massacre*.

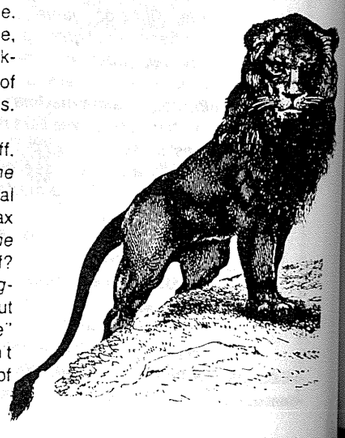
Side two begins with an East Indian sound, typical Sherwood, all within you and without you. "Music & Science Lovers" good morning with a non-stop "came, saw, conquered" segue into . . .

"Kiss The Champion" time to salute the Conqueror. We're deep into the Croaking Lizard zone again. Another prime cut. Bestow honors. Reagan, Thatcher chased away by thunder. Hold them. With spaceship, vice grip, voice grip, hot tip, merciless Upsetter still around to free the spellbound. Jah Lion wizzdom from chalice poppin' chamber. Words. Shot down. *Hold them with my suitcase, air space, my native case / Close down hell / No impunity*. A body slam dunk. We're pinned in dub. Upset already.

King Perry in Berry Street studio and "Allergic To Lies," yet he ain't allergic to love. This track bubbles pure. Chocolate shake, abracadabra flaming fire Chuck Perry taking over England, relieving the rich man of his wealth. Holy ghosts on the light posts. Short, sweet and no buts about it.

"Time Conquer" finishes the album off. It's history: *End saw, end conquer all, time came, time conquer*. With an industrial strength one-drop time boom. Mocking sax stacatto counter-Perry astride, *riding in the mystic eye*. Is it a landing or a blast-off? *Judgment come and judgment saw / Judgment conquer with a saw*. No one gets out of this "Ark-axis Chain-saw Massacre" dread and alive. Perry's safe and you won't be until you control your own legal copy of *Time Boom De Devil Dead*. ★


YAMAHA
CUS MOSIAH GARVEY
In a world of wolves one should go armed, and one of the most powerful defensive weapons within the reach of Negroes is the practice of race first in all parts of the world.



Dub President LEE SCRATCH PERRY

It's high noon within easy puking distance of the Westway. Dejected Saturday shoppers are momentarily bedazzled by a thin, wizened genius with REPENT stapled across his chest whose loudhailer spouts "truths and rights" at irregular intervals. Meet stream-of-unconsciousness roots rock rapper extraordinaire, President Abraham Lee Scratch Perry.

"The Queen's tongue is tied. All her speeches are ghost-written by lackeys, stockbrokers, remnants of her fading empire. Why? Because there's only one queen; Cleopatra! Anyone else claiming to rule is a predator, is a vampire and will be struck dead by lightning."

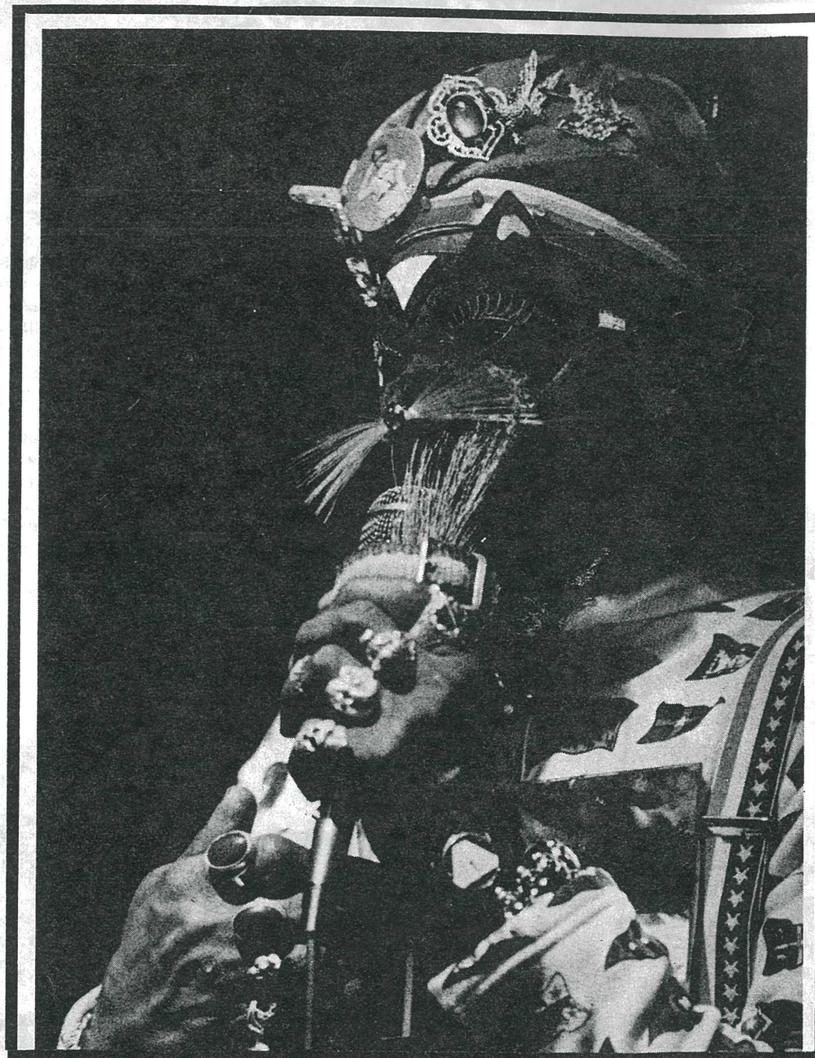
Steady on, old chap.

"Shut up! I want to be promoted as a madman whose influences come from trees, wind, earth, birds, fire and water, stamping my muddy boots all over EMI's well-tended carpets. I'm the last dustbinman. Every record I've ever made – all those productions, all those saucy rude-bwai dub-plates – is complete garbage. Especially the new one. But they still smell better than the country-bwai shclepp you hear from JA these days. No-one questions or argues with Scratch. Worship me! Prostrate when you enter my domain 'cos I'm the Red Ninja who's got no time for prissy hypocrites and bloodclaat bloodsuckers."

Storm clouds gather above as the certifiably sane Pipecock Jackson holds court. Government heads roll, the Gulf Of Capricorn quotes revelations, then threatens to reincarnate all sinners as dogs, sheep, goats and fowls. Right now he's redecorating this nonedescript room to suit his imperial tastes. Up go record sleeves and posters. Up go stickers, proclamations and photocopies of Selassie's likeness. The energetic exhibitionist plays up for the cameras: stomps around, gives a dictator's salute, alternately brandishes saws and some poor kiddie's yo-yo, mutters to no-one in particular, then lets out a prolonged yell like a pride of lions zeroing in on their prey, not to be confused with laughter.

"My name is Jesus H. Christ. Sometimes you've got to wear the devil's cloak just to stand up to dead soul elementals you meet in the business. Like when I gave my best for little or no remuneration; and they all tried to eat the Upsetter's flesh; I made a pact with the Shadow. I took on Empoeror Bedel Bokassa's persona, draped myself in jewellry and bathed in three-month old babies' blood. Then I became Idi Amin and needed a sacrifice a day to keep scavengers away. Now I've made my peace with Jah. The past means nothing; it's just this hundredweight my enemies use to keep me grovelling in the sand, to deny me my true respect."

When two sound-system Titans clash, even dogs in the wild notice the reverberations. This week sees the release of 'Jungle', credited to Lee Scratch Perry And The Dub Syndicate, an early morsel from the forthcoming 'Time-Boom De Devil Dead', that's a benchmark of sorts for what we once termed Reggae. Set up as some evil face-off between Adrian Sherwood's ON-U Sound techno-breakdown noise disturbances and this oracle's more earthly and mystical pronouncements, between the next century and something more ancient, here you'll find those redemptive qualities of endurance, emancipation and martyrdom you thought were lost forever.



PICTURE: MUR MACKEAN

THE BROTHER FROM ANOTHER PLANET

LEE PERRY
TOWN & COUNTRY CLUB

LEE 'SCRATCH' Perry belongs to that black music tradition of crazed madman-cum-musical visionary that also includes the likes of George Clinton, Strafe (of 'Set It Off' fame), The Mad Professor and Sun Ra. Such a tradition allows a history of black music to speak that is rarely spoken. Not the conventional orthodoxy of black music as pride and dignity with singers with the emotional range of tragic actors. Rather a tradition that delights in its ability to create bizarrely imaginative, inevitably comic, musical worlds, seemingly totally alien to drab everyday reality, whose existence, by virtue of these world's sheer otherness, stands as a powerful indictment of the existing world in all it's banality and monotony.

Way beyond weirdness, the world of Lee 'Scratch' Perry, the original Upsetter, is one where people wear umbrellas on their heads, where the bass is the place, where space constantly shifts, where age does not wither (Perry has got to be approaching 50), where reason sleeps and the dub quivers, and where sonic avant-garde formalism and having a good time make perfect bedfellows.

Tonight with Adrian Sherwood at the mixing desk, Perry concentrates on his most recent work, like the new single, 'Jungle' and the encore, 'Roast Fish And Cornbread', with its "ital . . . vital" trance-inducing chant. Onstage, Perry is not so much a focal point as a conductor, an instigator, a mischief-maker. As the numbers on stage swell to some 15 or 20, Perry sets in motion swirling patterns of sound and unidentified sonic objects, which he then stands back from, watching them spin and scatter over the heads of the audience.

Such is his sway, you get the feeling that Perry's physical body isn't necessarily required, only his inspiration. He can leave the stage as the harmonies of backing group, Akabu, become more insistent and the toasts of Gary Clail, from the All U Sound System, praising the regal Upsetter, take prominence. You still feel you're in the presence of Perry himself, live and direct.

Frank Owen

New Musical Express 3rd October, 1987

At the water's edge, the small middle-aged man tears a twig from a tree and slips it into his fearsome army boots. He is wearing black trousers, a belt like a boxing trophy and a head-dress with dozens of objects pinned to it.

● Beware the nutter's retribution! The Upsetter will smite with Excalibur all who wrenched the dub from his grasp! Drink your 'life piss' now 'cos LEE 'SCRATCH' PERRY is programming you to 'shit yourself with his madness'. Pass the bog paper, says IAN McCANN. Bong-diddly-bonkers shots by CHRIS CLUNN

He turns, and the array of mirrors adorning his body catches the sunlight, dazzling onlookers. He has a deadly earnest look on his face.

"I am glad I came here," he says, voice rising into a kind of bark, "or I would not have seen this rock. Look!" Obligingly we peer into the water. "This one looks like the harp. And this one," he yells, indicating another unremarkable lump of submerged stone, "looks like Excalibur."

He steps forward into squelchy mud, but he is untroubled. Rock, to him, is the foundation of life. A swan comes up, wondering who this nutter is. Behind us, a woman in her fifties gawps at this strange black man. She has never seen anyone like him. That's because there isn't anyone like him.

Zurich might seem the last place you would expect to find Lee Perry, once the prolific innovator of Jamaican sound and now a sporadic diversion on the fringes of music. Yet here he is scaring and entertaining the natives, living on a hill above Lake Zurich that the local cabbies call The Gold Coast or Millionaires' Row. And the Swiss have taken a shine to him and donated a resident's permit, something the British have never extended. When he clanks into Zurich airport covered in clutter the grinning customs officials call him 'The Medicine Man'. He is more at home here than anywhere.

In his girlfriend/manager's immaculate house there is no sign of the destructive mania that trashed his other homes, like the council house in Harrow he reduced to a graffiti-covered shell and the Black Ark studio in Kingston, Jamaica which he dug ponds in and set alight. Perry is in fact a fastidiously clean person, combing beard and hair endlessly, polishing his trinkets to a gleaming finish. Today's Scratch may not be Norman Normal, but compared to the manic Perry of yore he's a calm man.

LEE 'SCRATCH' Perry, The Upsetter, once worked his musical nuts off for little financial gain. In the '70s, no-one could make records like his, whether they wanted to or not. It was Perry who first thought of Bob Marley as more than a local artist and co-wrote many of his best songs, 'Small Axe' and 'Duppy Conqueror' among them. In the mid-'70s he produced dozens of classic reggae hits and mixed The Clash, Robert Palmer and almost Paul McCartney.

When the pressure got too much he closed his Black Ark studio and, legend has it, wound up in prison or hospital. For a decade since, Perry has been an erratic, bizarre recording artist, hardly a producer at all. Music doesn't dominate his thoughts anymore and he rejects reggae utterly, in name at least. But he has a new album to promote, 'From The Secret Laboratory', his first for the Island label (Mango) for years, and he is ready to talk in the conservatory of his girlfriend's garden. The question is, about what? Certainly something apocalyptic . . .

"It's easier to make plans from here. There's much less madness going on in Zurich than in England," he says, ignoring the fact that he has single-handedly doubled the insanity quotient. "This album is a protest. The people will demand their Poll Tax and income tax back, and march for their rights. The land belongs to all the people and the rich should give it back. And this interview is a judgement on Margaret Thatcher. Her neck will be chop off by the lightning sword. The mirror god himself will chop off Margaret Thatcher head and kill the seven demons in her. When those seven demons die there will be no more Margaret Thatcher, just an empty shell. As soon as this interview publish, it happen."

The King Of The Gnomes of Zurich

You may not be aware of it, but it was Perry who removed Ronald Reagan from government during a stay in New York, and last year he toppled Edward Seaga, now ex-Jamaican premier. He doesn't say *how* he did it, but I'm willing to believe him. And he cites Chris Blackwell's sale of Island Records as another victory for The Upsetter's magic. Perry has long been at war with Island, the company that issued much of his best mid-'70s material. In 1985 Perry's single 'Judgement In A Babylon' claimed that Island's head Chris Blackwell was a vampire. For Perry to re-enlist with the company is a strange move indeed, but most of Perry's moves are a little odd.

"It was not my idea to go back and do it, but Chris Blackwell finally realised that of all the artists he had been trying, there is only one Scratch and nobody could replace him. He thinks he has trapped me, but it is he who walk into my trap. This time, they will be running to me. I said that he will lose the record company, and it happens!"

Perhaps Perry is right: the buzz on 'Secret Laboratory' is the biggest surrounding one of his records for years and Mango *may* have to beg for a follow-up. But surely he is as much a part of the music biz as they are?

"I'm not here to represent the record business, but the Holy Trinity. I don't back down and don't bow. I face all challenges. I was born to make the impossible possible. The planet is called Pisces, Piss-seas. The piss planet. Piss is the water of life. If you piss in a bottle and leave it a couple of days, it will form a rainbow. If someone tell me to piss off, they do me a favour. I will piss-*on*! Heh heh heh heh!"

PERRY'S BEHAVIOUR is a shade unorthodox. Recently, at Island's HQ he generously offered around a drink of murky liquid he called "Life piss". It may not have been urine, but if it was i wouldn't be the worst thing he's imbibed. I once saw him in a studio requesting acid. Failing that, he wanted wine, and finally threatened to drink the alcohol used for cleaning tape heads. "Don't you think I'd do it? I've drunk it before," he growled, grabbing the bottle. Somehow, Perry still seems remarkably fit.

'Secret Laboratory' was produced by Adrian Sherwood, who worked with Perry on 1987's 'Time Boom, De Devil Dead'. Perry is unimpressed with the On-U man. "It was not my idea to work with Adrian again. I don't lik people that want to copy me or replace me. I was going to Virgin Records but they said they wanted me to work with Adrian. So I went to Mango and they said the same thing. So I thought, nah I'll do it and f— them."

In the past few years more than 25 albums of Perry's old material out-takes, productions, and som tracks where he perhaps passed by the studio on a number 37 bus have been issued in his name by record companies.

"Me is a man who all of them say is mad. They thought I was dead and they wanted to take everything from me: me music, me voice, me name, me dub. What have I taken, what have they got that I want? *Nothing.* Judgement is coming to them. I don't need a lawyer, they will perish by natural law."

It may take some time, becaus Perry isn't interested in his past. The mid-'70s might have been hi artistic peak but it was

undoubtedly a period of great mental turmoil and pain for Perry, working 16 hours a day, drinking, smoking ganja, eventually losing his partner and kids. "It has taken me ten years to build myself back," he says, in a rare moment without jokes or *obeah* threats. "I'm not going to throw everything away."

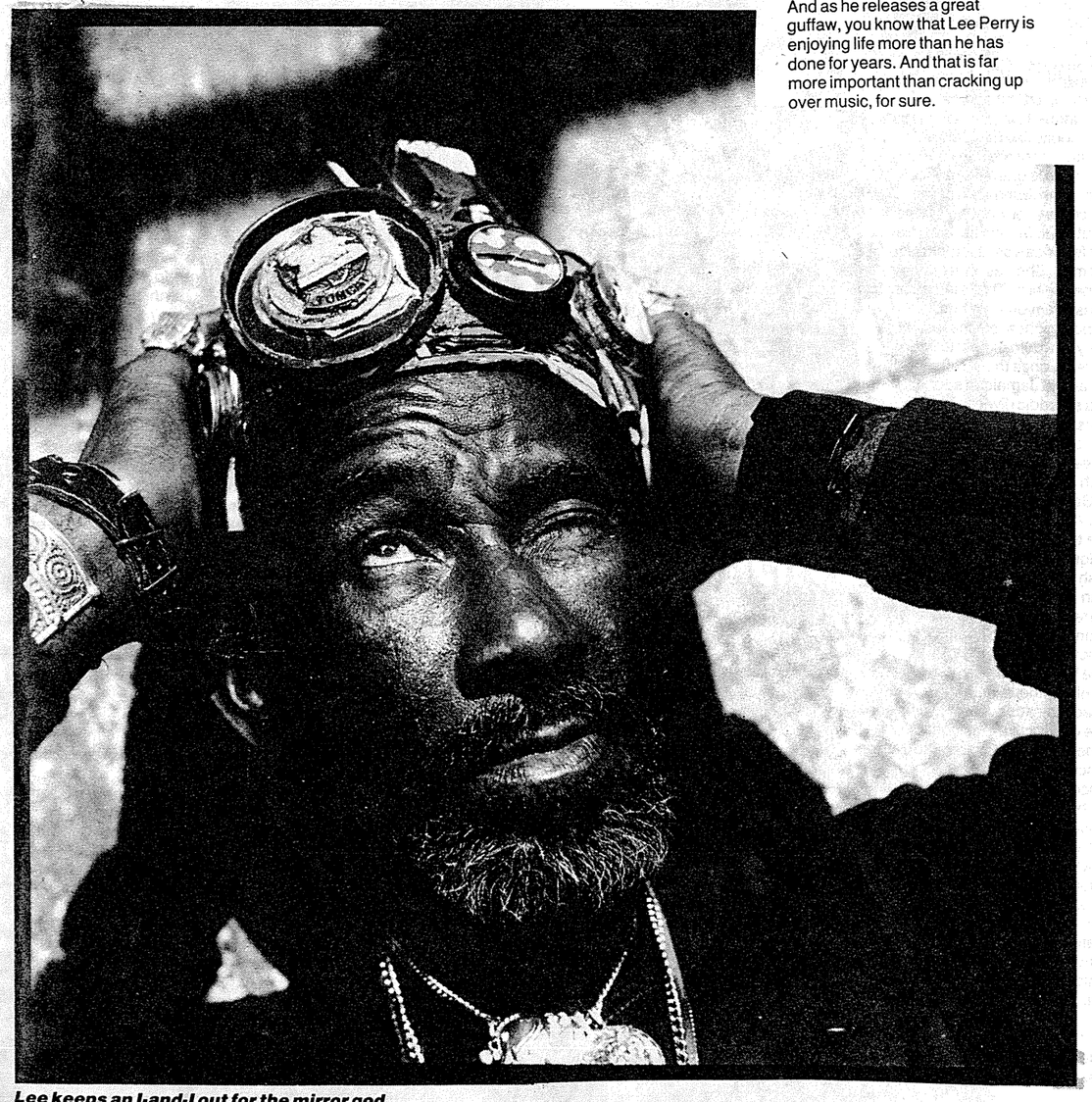
Scratch claims to be 44, a considerable underestimate, though undoubtedly, he retains the imagination and wonderment of a child.

"My life is straight out of a comic-book. Definitely. I love comics from when I was a kid and it don't change. I love natural things, anything from the earth. Stones fascinate me. Why anyone takes cocaine I don't know. Stones get me stoned! If I want to get high I put a stone in me drink and drink it! I don't intend to get older to please anyone: my body might get old but my spirit does not. I'm still a child in my mind. And my madness is a shield, it protects me. No-one knows what to expect. I use it to shock people: by the time they realise what's happening, they will shit! I programme people to shit themselves with my madness! Ha ha ha!"

There follows an Upsetter lecture on why people should be allowed to relieve themselves anywhere. "Free shit! Freedom for piss! Piss and shit on the Poll Tax! This is a nasty conversation, but it is reality, more facts of life than the fax machine can produce!"

Perry says he once made good music which no-one appreciated, so now he makes "dustbin music because the people want it". Whether he considers his new LP fit for the tip is a moot point: there are certainly strange moments, like the cooing female harmonies singing "*Straightjacket and all*".

Perry seems certain of his place in the world, a particularly apposite position considering his current city of residence. He wanders to the end of the garden and stands by a circle of garden gnomes, raising his five-foot frame to its full, wiry height. "I am the king of the gnomes! The little king of the gnomes of Zurich!" And as he releases a great guffaw, you know that Lee Perry is enjoying life more than he has done for years. And that is far more important than cracking up over music, for sure.



Lee keeps an I-and-I out for the mirror god

—New Musical Express 28 April, 1990

Scratch Attack:

A Whirlwind Consumer's Guide to the Recent Explosion of Lee "Scratch" Perry Releases

By Steve Hellig

Lee "Scratch" Perry has been both one of the guiding lights and the most enigmatic figures in reggae since the beginning. From his early Studio One days in the mid-1960s, through his production of the seminal Wailers' classics *African Herbsman* and *Soul Revolution* and his own neglected solo albums of the 1970s, to a string of uneven but always interesting and sometimes mind-boggling efforts in the 1980s, "the Upsetter" has been unrivaled among reggae producers and artists in his ability to confound, confuse and delight. His muse may be the idiosyncratic and uncompromising one of a self-proclaimed madman, but when Scratch's light is on, it illuminates his friends and fries his enemies.

Such a powerful and unique vision tends to draw disciples, and Scratch is no exception. For many years, an international clan of devotees has snatched up any recording with his name on it, whether as producer or singer, new or old. Scratch fanatics can never get too much of his music, and historically there has not been much to go around.

The past year has changed all that. Maybe it was in the stars or in expired copyrights, or perhaps it was due to the heightened profile that Scratch achieved with his one-two punch of masterpiece albums, ***Battle of Armigideon*** (Trojan) in 1986 and ***Time Boom X de Devil Dead*** (On-U Sound, with Adrian Sherwood's Dub Syndicate) in 1987. Maybe the marketers finally realized there is a demand for anything recorded by Perry.

Whatever the reason, the last 18 months have witnessed an explosion in the availability of his material, which was previously out of print or never before available. At least 20 albums of Scratch's music have arrived on these shores – more than came to light in the entire previous decade! True fanatics will want everything but the less-addicted or merely curious may need some help in choosing. What follows is a whirlwind tour, roughly in order of recording, of the embarassment of riches newly available to anyone who wishes to partake of one of the mad geniuses of reggae.

Starting at the beginning, ***Chicken Scratch*** (Heartbeat) collects a dozen of the earliest Perry solo efforts recorded for Studio One, backed mostly by the legendary Skatalites with vocal help from the Soul Vendors, including Rita Marley. These prereggae recordings are fun and show that Scratch's penchant for boasting, toasting and rudeness was in place at an early stage. The title tune is the source of his most enduring nickname.

By 1968, Scratch was on his own, and two albums from Trojan's dynamite series of re-releases collect samples from his next phase. ***Shocks of Mighty*** (Attack-U.K.) contains some of the earliest cuts with his house band the Upsetters, with vocals from such obscure but great singers as Dave Barker, Neville Grant and Leo Graham (the classic "Three Blind Mice"). ***Give Me Power*** (Trojan) collects cuts from the same 1969-1973 period, including various versions of several of the same tunes. If I had to pick one, I'd give the nod to *Shocks of Mighty* as the stronger collection.

Probably the biggest recording news of the past year for Bob Marley fans just happens to fit into the Scratch stable: Trojan re-released the Perry-produced Wailers landmark ***Soul Revolution*** lp, but in a two-record set with the long-unavailable instrumental version of that album. A must for Marley completists.

From there we go deep into dubland. ***Lee Perry and King Tubby in Dub Confrontation 60s and 70s*** (Angella-U.K.) collects 10 bare-bones dubs. Judging from the musicians, titles and overall sound, the tracks may or may not actually have been produced by Perry. ***Reminiah Dub*** (Original Music-U.K.) contains one side of Upsetter dubs and one side by Sly and Robbie. The fact that at least three Scratch cultists have admitted that the Sly and Robbie side sounds stronger is enough indication that this set is for the fanatic only. But ***King Tubby Meets the Upsetter*** (Studio 16-U.K.) and ***Blackboard Jungle Dub*** (RAS) are another story; each contains a strong dose of different styles of Scratch's unique dubbing. Along with ***Cloak and Dagger*** (Black Art-U.K.), an album of mostly instrumental tunes in Scratch's unique cartoon music style rather than dubs, any one of these three records will provide a glimpse at the range of sounds that Scratch was getting out of his Black Ark home studio in the early to mid-'70s.

The uneven ***Scratch and Company Chapter 1*** (RAS) also collects songs and dubs from this period (and is available, along with ***Blackboard Jungle Dub***, on a RAS cd titled ***Scratch Attack***). *Blackboard Jungle* is the acknowledged classic among these, containing as it does some of the dubs Scratch mixed up from the early Wailers sessions.

By the mid-'70s, Scratch really hit his stride, producing many of the all-time classic reggae records by both himself and others. Two great and essential solo albums, *Return of the Super Ape* and *Roast Fish Collie Weed and Corn Bread* have surfaced on VP albums and cassettes (Jamaica, NY). Unfortunately, the sound quality is inferior but this is still legendary material. These long-rare lps feature Perry at his most expressive and melodic. ***Turn and Fire*** and ***Majestic Mirror Master Mix*** (both on Anachron-Netherlands) collect classic Black Ark singles, including a full side of Heptones remixes from *Party Time*, Max Romeo's "Sexy Natty" and Scratch himself on "Bafflin' Smoke Signal" and "Captive." ***Black Ark in Dub*** (Black Ark International) features great dubs from this period.

Last in this group is ***Excaliburman*** (Seven Leaves-U.K.), an excellent collection of vocal tunes and dubs featuring Perry and others on such cuts as the evocative "Travelling" and a poignant "Perry's Mood." This album might well be subtitled *Heart of the Ark Volume 3*, after the two previous fine albums of '70s material on this label. Finally, also deserving of mention are two worthy collections of mostly Scratch-produced Junior Byles cuts on Trojan, ***When Will Better Come*** and ***Beat Down Babylon*** as well as the RAS reissue of Prince Jazzbo's deep and rootsy *Ital Corner*.

In a class by itself is ***Open the Gate*** (Trojan), a three-record box set of rare and classic Perry productions from this peak period. These are extended mixes of cuts by the Congos, Junior

Murvin, the Heptones, Horace Smart, Doctor Alimantado and many others. This set is probably the greatest single source of Perry treasures yet. Very deep and wide indeed.

Perry took a mysterious hiatus from recording in the late '70s and released less well-received output in the first half of the '80s, such as ***The Return of Pipecock Jackxon*** (Black Star Liner-Holland), ***Mystic Miracle Star*** (Heartbeat) and ***History Mystery Prophecy*** (Mango) as well as the scandalous ***Judgement inna Babylon*** single (Lion of Judah). Heartbeat (***Some of the Best***), Trojan (***The Upsetter Collection***) and Mango (***Reggae Greats***) released fine collections during this time. Scratch himself roared back with the killer 1986 and 1987 albums mentioned above. ***Satan Kicked the Bucket*** (Wackies) appeared in 1989. It is a less-adventurous set of Scratch's chants and rants over somewhat sterile-sounding rhythms, although some of the grooves are still hypnotic. A dub version of this album, ***Lee "Scratch" Perry Meets Bullwackie in Satan's Dub***, has just been released on cassette by ROIR.

The latest releases from Scratch involve some confusion. ***Sensi Dub Volumes 1 and 2*** (Original Music-U.K.) feature Sly and the Revolutionaries and list Perry as a producer; however solid these dubs may be, some Scratch fans are skeptical about the extent of his involvement. Much of the music just doesn't sound like his. The second volume does feature some of his trademark wild effects and is the stronger set.

Things get even stranger with the two volumes entitled ***Mad Professor Meets Lee Perry*** (Angella). It appears these inferior products are bootleg releases, since the more recent ***Mystic Warrior*** and ***Mystic Warrior Dub*** albums on the Mad Professor's Ariwa (U.K.) label insist they are the only genuine such collaborations. And genuine they are. Scratch digs deep into his verbal arsenal to toast over some deep Mad Professorial riddims and special effects, including reworkings of some Bob Marley classics. Try the vocal album first and beware not only imitations, but also that the two authentic records have very similar covers (the dub one is red). Then there is a 1989 promotional 12" single, ***Masters of the Universe/Ark Vendetta***, which contains some of the strangest Scratch music yet; not reggae, not quite funk, not really anything else but his own.

The pace shows no sign of slowing as the '90s begin. The newest Trojan re-release, ***Version Like Rain***, is an all-Upsetter showcase of multiple cuts of each of three trademark Perry rhythms, including "Fever" and "Beat Down Babylon." This one is essential only for collectors but should be very illustrative of what wonders can be worked with the same track.

Perhaps the latest news is also the greatest: The second joint offering from Scratch and English mixmeister Adrian Sherwood is ready for delivery. ***From the Secret Laboratory*** (Mango-U.K.) on first listening sounds like the best new Scratch set since the last pairing of these two visionaries. It features fully updated reworkings of some of Perry's 1970s classics, including "Vibrate On" (with Augustus Pablo) and "I've Got the Groove," plus some new killer material wherein Scratch expounds on his favorite themes of judgment, justice, corruption, carnality, self-aggrandizement and the like over some killer riddims. "Reeling and rocking, straight-jacket and all," as he puts it. The first 12" from the album features a great non-lp B-side remix of the Heptones signature tune, "Party Time."

Rumors abound that additional rare and out-of-print Perry releases are on the way, including more from the Trojan archives and some vocals with the Japanese dub unit Mute Beat. In fact, the third three-lp box set from Trojan has just come out. Titled ***Building the Ark***, it is full of peak-era Upsetter rarities.

Those who can't wait are directed to a new all-Scratch magazine, *The Upsetter*, published by the Anachron Foundation, P.O. Box 10920, 1001 EX Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The first issue of this unique publication contains an interview, discography and even some colorful Scratch postcards. Meanwhile, Lee Perry fans around the world await the next message from the madman himself.

Special thanks to Andrew Rush for research assistance.

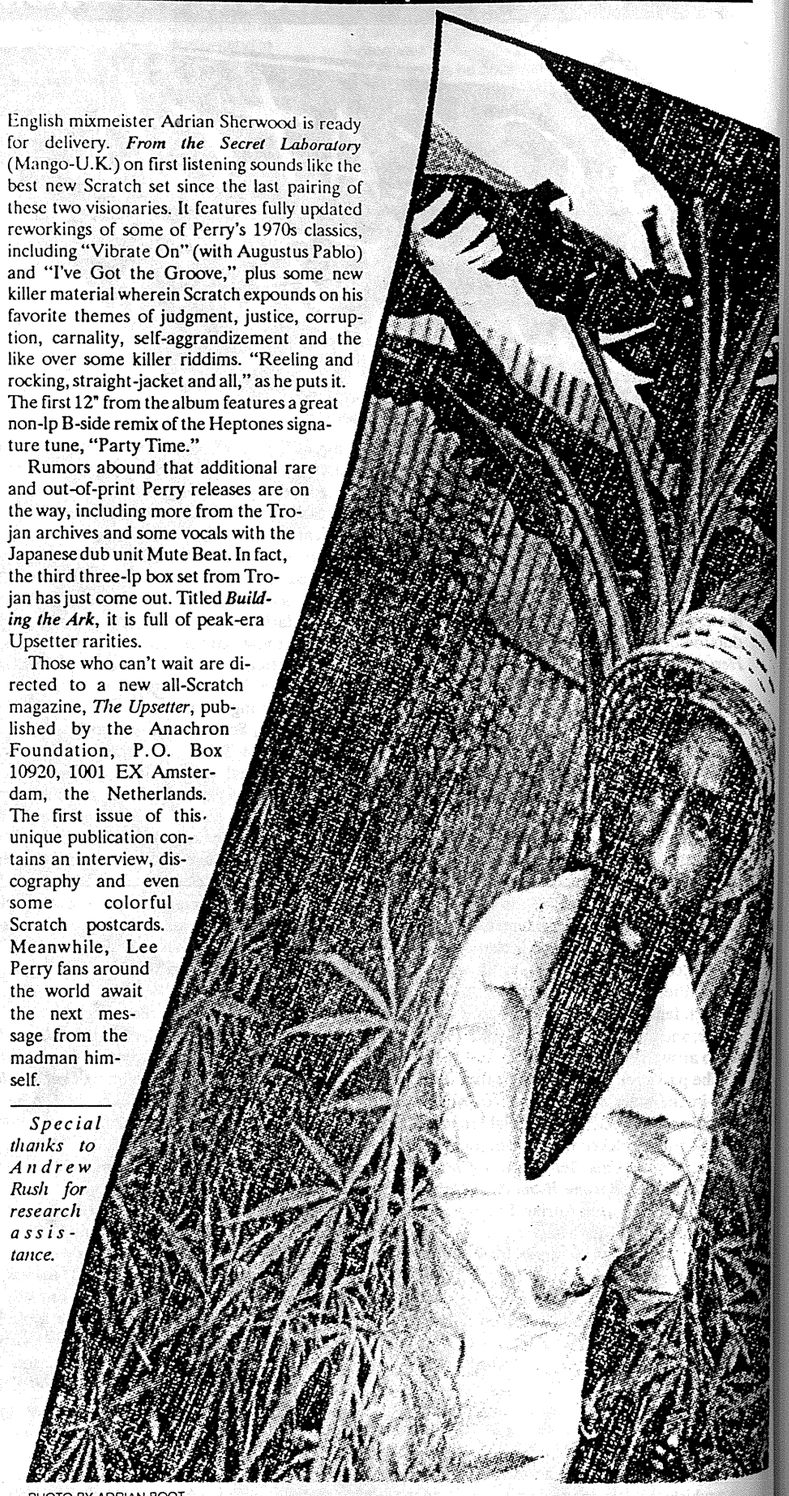


PHOTO BY ADRIAN BOOT

Scratching the Surface

BY STEVE HEILIG

THE MISSING LEE "SCRATCH" PERRY AFRICAN SESSIONS SURFACE AT LAST

The following story has long been the stuff of reggae legend, especially tantalizing for the rabid fans of madman/genius Lee "Scratch" Perry for over 15 years. Along with the many mysteries surrounding the veteran Jamaican producer's life, mind and career was the rumor of a mid-1970s collaboration with some African musicians at his fabled Black Ark home/studio. But the tapes, if they ever existed, vanished, and another unsolved reggae mystery was born.

Scratch himself retreated from the producing and recording limelight when his studio was destroyed (not long after the African sessions supposedly took place), but he resurfaced with a vengeance in the late 1980s with a bewildering flurry of authentic and putative recordings, including some long-lost gems and a fair amount of dross. Some 30 releases have appeared under his name in the last five years, but the African sessions were not among them—until now.

The legendary African sessions have materialized. From Kingston via Africa and Eu

BELOW: SCRATCH, SEKE AND KALO. THE PHOTO APPEARED ON THE HEART OF THE ARK ALBUM JACKET WITH THE TWO AFRICANS CROPPED OUT.

... ● How about this, dub fans? Obscure reggae label Seven Leaves is preparing to let loose seven previously unreleased **LEE 'SCRATCH' PERRY** albums recorded at the infamous Blark Ark studios during Perry's peak period. Early titles due for release are 'Itching For Scratch' and 'Megaton Dub Vol III' with more to follow. Seven Leaves will also be making a large amount of Perry and **AUGUSTUS PABLO** material available on CD for the first time. Starting it all off will be the release of the **JOLLY BROTHERS'** classic 'Conscious Man' featuring Perry mixes...
Reissued: peak Perry

rope comes *From the Heart of the Congo*, a collection of six songs credited to Zairean musicians Seke Molenga and Kalo Kawongolo and produced by none other than the Upsetter himself. The limited-edition record was released in 1991 by Belgium-based Tropical Sounds Music, whose founder, Robert "Jah Robbie" Kuijpers, finally located the long-lost tapes. Here is the tale as recounted by Jah Robbie:

Turn back the clock to 1977 Kingston, Jamaica, a rich period in reggae history when many masters of the genre were cranking out some of their most inspired contributions. Marley, Spear, Cliff, Bunny Wailer and other veterans had come into their maturity as individual artists, and newer groups such as the Mighty Diamonds and Culture, whose prophetic *Two Sevens Clash* had set the entire island on edge that year, were emerging like weeds. In an otherwise quiet neighborhood of Kingston called Cardiff Crescent, the revered and feared Perry sent forth a stream of classics by the Heptones, Max Romeo, George Faith and himself, all backed by the Upsetters, his unsurpassed house band of hand-picked roots musicians.

Meanwhile, hoping to capitalize on the reggae buzz, a now-nameless Frenchwoman, a would-be reggae manager/producer, was planning to mastermind an African/Caribbean crossover hit by importing some African musicians to the fertile musical grounds of Jamaica. The chosen Africans, selected for their multi-instrumental talents (to avoid the expense of importing an entire band), were Zaireans Seke Molenga and Kalo Kawongolo, then working with one of the founders of modern Congolese/Zairean *soukous*, Seigneur Tabu Ley Rochereau. The plan was to record with reggae musicians at the renowned Dynamic Sounds studio in Kingston.

Soon after their arrival in Kingston, however, the woman apparently succumbed a bit too ardently to the lure of the Caribbean and absconded with a Jamaican lover and all the funds for the project. The Zaireans were stranded, strangers in a strange land. Penniless, they were soon booted from their expensive tourist hotel to wander the streets of Kingston. After much searching they arrived at Dynamic Sounds, only to be turned away.

Nobody would envy the plight of these hapless men, thrown into the Trenchtown ghetto without even a means of communication. Begging, mostly unsuccessfully, in French and Lingala, the only languages they spoke, they ate from garbage cans and were beaten and stabbed by would-be robbers during the next few weeks. Finally and fortunately they encountered a sympathetic Rastafarian who had once worked for Perry as a record salesman, and he brought them to Black Ark.

Perry had just produced one of the all-time classic Rasta recordings, *Heart of the Ark* by the Congos, and had a growing obsession with things African. In light of this and the fact that Zaire had been known as the Congo while under Belgian rule, Scratch (who also had recently encountered a UFO in his yard, an experience that hastened his growing personal mysticism and evolving otherworldly/earthy sound) saw the arrival of the Africans as much more than a chance encounter. In Perry's mind, the hand of Jah had delivered them to Black Ark, and therefore the musical fruits of this gift must be made manifest.

The mind boggles at the idea of these unsuspecting Africans striving to communicate with Lee Perry, but they apparently fared much better under his care than any time since their arrival in Jamaica.

In any event, playing and recording at Black Ark began almost immediately. Molenga and Kawongolo set to work writing new songs, some with lyrics based upon their recent tribulations on the streets. Scratch rounded up some of the Upsetters and other stellar session men, including Earl "Chinna" Smith, Boris Gardiner, Keith Sterling, Winston Wright, and the horns of Glen Dacosta, "Deadly" Headly Bennett, David Madden and Vin Gordon. A group called the Jolly Brothers, already recording at Black Ark, were enlisted for backing vocals. The Zaireans contributed some backing instrumentation of drumming, guitars, horns and vocals and their African percussion was augmented by the all-star Jamaican trio of Scully, Sticky and Scratch. (In another interesting development, the album from the Jolly Brothers sessions, *Conscious Man*, was recently released by Seven Leaves/Roots records in England. Molenga and Kawongolo, acknowledged as "Carlos and Malenge from Zaire," contributed some backing instrumentation.)

This unprecedented international musical conglomerate, overseen by Perry, integrated the African vocals and melodic senses of the visitors with the chunky one-drop beat of Jamaica. The songs on the album range from the deep Rasta/African chants of "African Roots" to the neopsychedelic horn and guitar solos of "Muto Ya Motema" to the distinctly Scratch-produced phase-shifted-and-lions-roaring roots reggae of "Bad Food" and "Mengieb" to the more African-sounding grooves and laments of "Nakoya" and "Guipimbu Gienn." The singing is mostly in Lingala and some local Zairean dialects, but the musical flavor could have come from nobody but Lee Perry and cohorts. All of the songs end in a long fade, probably indicating extended jams that likely went on for some time.

Recorded at a time before reggae had really begun to take hold in Africa and before much African music was readily available in the West, the blend of influences on this record, however unique, is fairly seamless. Without even a shared language, the Zaireans matched their hosts in contributing to the result. This is a missing link not only in Perry's musical career but between the music of the Mother Continent and Jamaica as well.

Molenga and Kawongolo were given a master tape of these six songs before they left Jamaica for Africa, not to be seen again for many years. The destruction of Black Ark and the chaotic state and gradual looting of Perry's massive collection of tapes resulted in the disappearance of the original recordings and the eventual legendary status of these sessions.

Fast-forward a decade to Belgium in the late 1980s, where a large expatriate Zairean community had settled in Brussels. Dutch producer/musician and longtime Scratchophile Kuijpers (now associated with the RUN-Netherlands label as well) had contacts there and eventually obtained a tape of the sessions from Molenga. The record does not quite sound like a master tape and has a certain muddy quality—but that is not unusual for Jamaican recordings and Upsetter material of this vintage in particular. Kuijpers contacted Perry and played the tape for him—even Scratch had not heard the recordings since 1977. A partnership was formed; in addition to releasing *From the Heart of the Congo* in Europe, Kuijpers has worked with Perry on more recent recordings and tours since Perry relocated to Switzerland a few years ago.

Kuijpers claims that Island Records has an additional half-dozen tracks from these sessions somewhere in the vaults but refuses to release them for reasons of inferior quality (since when has that stopped a reggae label from . . . oh never mind). I'm sure that the many fans of Lee Perry and students of reggae history would agree that, even if the tapes are sonically or even musically inferior, they deserve to be heard! In any event, arrangements are underway to release *From the Heart of the Congo* on cd (with a bonus instrumental track from the same sessions) and to find an American distributor for these recordings. There is also a possible American tour by Scratch brewing, as has been rumored off and on for years. But who knows—if these missing sessions can finally appear, perhaps gringos will actually get a chance to see Scratch invade the heart of Babylon as well.

For information on U.S. availability of Heart of the Congo, *contact Robert Kuijpers, c/o RUNNetherlands Music, Brusselsestraat 8, 6211 PE Maastricht, Holland; tel.: 31-43-255396; fax: 31-43-217468.*

RESURFACING SCRATCH

Dear *Beat*,

Many thanks to Steve Heilig for helping to solve the mystery of "the missing Lee Perry African sessions" ("Reggae Obsession," Vol. 12, #2, 1993). Back in 1979 I came across a remarkable Zairean lp, released on a French label, titled simply *Seke Molenga & Kalo Kawongolo*. I was bowled over by this Zairean reggae, which blended Lingala vocals and a strong Central African feeling with a dreamy, bass-heavy, dubwise throb that sounded like it could only have come out of a late-'70s, colly-saturated Kingston studio.

Now, almost 15 years later, I learn that the studio was Black Ark, with Lee Perry at the helm, and it all makes sense. The story of Molenga's and Kawongolo's misadventures in Trenchtown was amazing, and I only have one thing to add to it. Heilig says that "Molenga and Kawongolo were given a master tape [of their recordings with Scratch] before they left Jamaica for Africa, not to be seen again for many years." In fact, the recordings resurfaced only a year or two later on the abovementioned 1979 lp, which was released by the Parisian Sonafric label (SAF 50084) and distributed by Sonodisc. The album (which has no credits and gives no indication that it was recorded in Jamaica) was sold by African record stores in Paris, New York and Washington, DC, throughout the 1980s.

Its re-release on both lp and cd as *From the Heart of the Congo* will help to increase awareness of the magnitude and breadth of Perry's output at Black Ark/Art (which includes several other seldom-acknowledged gems, such as the roots Jamaican gospel recordings produced by Perry during the 1970s). It's coverage like this that puts *The Beat* in a league of its own.

Yours,
Ken Bilby
Washington, DC

LEE "SCRATCH" PERRY
SOUNDZS FROM THE HOT LINE
(Heartbeat HB76, 1992)

The gradual mining of the mysterious Lee Perry historical vaults continues with this collection of mostly unreleased cuts "recorded during the heyday of Black Ark in the '70s." Black Ark was of course Perry's own studio, built after his apprenticeship with various other Jamaican producers and from whence he produced some of the wildest and most memorable reggae in history. Trojan Records has been putting out material from this era for some time and Heartbeat now joins in with this offering.

Some of the cuts here will be familiar to Perry fanatics, having circulated among the faithful on scratchy (pun intended) old tapes. "Bionic Rat" appeared on one of the Trojan box sets, and "News Flash" on at least one recent collection. The rest is rare and groovy gravy culled from old unlabeled boxes and tapes and, while perhaps not among the best of his long career, is far superior to some of the more recent knockoffs released in his name.

The players are the peak-era Upsetters featuring the Barrett brothers, Earl "Chinna" Smith, stellar hornsmen and even Augustus Pablo on "Ashes and Dust," a remake of the "Vibrate On" rhythm he and Scratch worked up for a never-to-materialize joint album (here with overdubbed vocals which to my ears sound suspiciously modern and non-1970-ish). The chunky phase-shifted sound Perry conjured in his smoky studio in the mid-'70s is well in evidence here, especially on "Rainbow Throne," "So You Come, So You Go" and the 12½-minute "Free Up the Prisoners." "Righteous Oily," "Sweet Guava Jelly" and the tantalizing snippet, "Track 13," sound of older vintage. "When You Walk" is soulful with sweet female backing vocals.

Soundzs from the Hot Line is a collector's delight, and hopefully more such material will surface. There are more than enough Perry fanatics out there to warrant such releases—a disturbing thought, to be sure. But as Scratch himself might say, let the music flow.

—*Steve Heilig*

There's no one quite like Lee "Scratch" Perry, and ***Soundzs From the Hot Line*** (Heartbeat) will not disappoint his longtime fans. Previously uncollected tracks mostly from the mid-'70s, some all-time favorites like "Bionic Rat" and previous 12" rarities "Babylon A Fall" and "Free Up the Prisoners" are included. A couple of tracks that seem to be from a much earlier period, "Standing on the Hill" and "When You Walk," I'd never heard before and they both knocked me out. I can't remember how many times I've said "this is one of Perry's best albums" but hey, this one really is. He is an incom-Perry-able artist and never fails to amaze with his work no matter what period it's from, and many collectors and fans would agree these are from one of his best. I'm one of those who puts him in the genius as opposed to madman category but it's a fine line and whichever side he's on is fine with me.

REGGAE UPDATE

Steve Heilig mentioned the release of a Lee Perry–produced **Jolly Brothers** lp, ***Conscious Man*** (Roots-U.K.) in his excellent piece, "Scratching the Surface," in the last *Beat*. I'd just like to point out that, except for the title track (which was also a U.K. 45 and anthology cut) it's a completely different lp than 1979's *Consciousness* (Ballistic-U.K.) which was (again excepting that classic track) a mostly disappointing selection of love songs and not produced by Perry. The "new" version is Rasta hardball, with every song an unheard "message" milestone of its time. Some of the best tracks are "Brotherly Love" (featuring Hendrich Nicholson), "Back Biter," "Dread Dreader" and "Babylon A Fight Rasta." These are from Perry's "underwater" period when layered production and thick mixes produced a sound not heard before or since. This is one new release even those of you who stopped buying in the '70s will find a necessity. *[Roots Records, London; (081) 885-3771]* Chuck Foster

THE UPSETTERS
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UPSETTERS
(Lagoon/ROIR LGCD 1083, 1993)

LEE PERRY AND THE UPSETTERS
REVOLUTION DUB
(Lagoon/ROIR LGCD 1702, 1992)

LEE PERRY
BLACK ARK IN DUB
(Lagoon/ROIR LGCD 1013, 1991)

EARL SIXTEEN
PHOENIX OF PEACE
(Seven Leaves SLLP 8, 1993)

KALO KAWONGOLO AND SEKE MOLENGA
FROM THE HEART OF THE CONGO
(RUNNetherlands RN0029, 1993)

The continued excavation of the vaults of Lee Perry's career, which now spans four decades and as many continents, continues to turn up both treasures and trash. Among the recent arrivals, this quintet of releases fits firmly into the former category, especially for Scratch collectors.

For a few years now, a former Trojan Records exec named Enzo Hamilton has been reissuing classic reggae on his French label, Esoldun. Now the redoubtable folks at ROIR have cut a deal to distribute some of those discs in the U.S. The catalog of Esoldun/Lagoon/ROIR releases to date focuses on vintage-era Jamaican rulers such as the Ethiopians, Jacob Miller, and of course, the Upsetter himself.

The Good, the Bad, and the Upsetters was one of the first Upsetter albums, first released on Trojan in 1970. It became one of the rarer Perry productions, and for that reason alone this re-release is welcome. Admittedly, these mostly organ-led instrumentals, a hallmark of Perry's early style, are not among his most distinctive work. They can indeed sound cheesy and evoke an ice-skating rink. But at other times they recall Booker T and the MGs gone rock steady, and completists, if such an obsession is still possible to fulfill in Scratch's case, will want this.

A few years forward brings us to *Revolution Dub*, a custom collection of songs and dubs waxed circa 1970-75. Here Perry backed off on the organ and brought the bass and drums forward into dub as we now know it, with vocal snatches from the likes of Jimmy Riley and Bunny Clark, along with some television talk and some of the loudest belches on record, courtesy of Scratch himself. It's a skimpy 30 minutes but worth it for a look at this period in Perry's demented development.

Black Ark in Dub is a grab bag of B-side dubs and snippets from other sources, purportedly all recorded in 1977 at Perry's fabled Black Ark studio and backed by the basic Upsetter quintet featuring the Barrett brothers. But there are also horns and other musicians present and I suspect the sampling is from throughout the mid-'70s, which is not to quibble but to say this is primo Perry dub. Ten of these 14 cuts appeared on vinyl a couple of times over the years, and the additions here include a muddy version of the then-ubiquitous Bee Gees' "How Deep is Your Love" and other examples of full-effect Upsetter studio-tweaking, ranging from totally primitive to soundtracks for Halloween in space.

The most mysterious latest release comes from veteran singer Earl 16 on the Seven Leaves label, an intermittent purveyor of some of Scratch's best stuff. *Phoenix of Peace* is listed as being produced by Perry at Black Ark and certainly bears his unmistakable stamp, although no dates or musicians are listed. I would hazard a guess that this is again of 1970s vintage, although it could be more recent. Overlooking some sloppy editing and a few uninspired tracks at the start, some of this is great, especially "Step by Step," with a beautiful flute and chorus. "Freedom" is the only familiar track, from a previous Seven Leaves collection. Earl 16's voice is strong and sweet here and this is a pleasant suprise.

Finally, it must be noted that the long-lost and recently resurrected African/Upsetter sessions written about in great detail in *The Beat* a few issues back have now appeared on cd, with liner notes from yours truly and a bonus track called "River Stone"—which on my copy of the disc turns out to be the Perry-produced Robert Palmer chestnut, "Love Can Run Faster." A boo-boo, or just another oddity in the strange world of the Upsetter?

—*Steve Heilig*

THE BEAT VOL. 12 #6, 1993

The Upsetters and Friends, *Upsetting the Nation* (Trojan-U.K.). There's been so many re-releases of Lee Perry productions it is always amazing when another appears containing previously uncollected yet brilliant selections. This set focuses on the Upsetters, the Barrett brothers' rhythm section, and features both organ-led instrumentals and vocal tracks, most in the chugging groove of the time, defined by this band. JIMMY HORI

Another artist reviewed last issue (the album was *Not For Sale*) **Earl Sixteen** is back already with ***Phoenix of Peace*** (Seven Leaves–U.K.) Produced by Lee Perry (although he may have phoned it in), Sid Bucknor seems to have done the final mix. Many of the tracks are recognizable Perry '70s classics onto which the vocals seem to have been added recently—"Apartheid System" is voiced over Perry's classic "Dreadlocks in Moonlight" rhythm and "Set the Children Free" is Bonnie and Rickie's immortal "Bush Weed Corn Trash"—although at least a couple—"Step By Step" and maybe also "Jah Army" (two of the disc's strongest cuts)—aren't tracks I recognize. I wish I knew more about it—this is all speculation—and even the vocals could have been done awhile back (although not as early as the tracks)—but the combination is a great one. Sixteen, who

CHUCK FOSTER

has kept his musical quality high by sticking to the roots and culture of his early recordings, is a welcome element in the Perry universe.

THE BEAT VOL. 13 #1, 1994

It Sipple Out Deh

BY MICHAEL TURNER

JAH LLOYD IN A PHOTO TAKEN IN KINGSTON RECENTLY.

JAH LLOYD, FROM ALBUM COVER IN 1978.

KINGSTON, JA—*The initial surprise upon meeting Jah Lloyd (or Jah Lion, as he was known when recording for Lee Perry) is his tiny stature. Everything about his recordings suggests heft: the growling voice, the big Lee Perry productions, and the larger-than-life themes. Although many reggae artists have pretended to the role of prophet and seer; only a few (like Jah Lloyd, Prince Far I or the Abyssinians) have made music with Old Testament zeal and forcefulness. Jah Lloyd's best music was frankly religious, often drawn directly from Biblical chapter and verse, yet it had all the heat and grit of a Kingston sidewalk.*

Q: What was the first thing you did for Upsetter?

A: First tune I do on the Upsetter way back was "King of Kings" as Pat Francis. Then I do "Flashing My Whip." Then I do "Take A Sip of This A Collie." I do those things same time in the studio with "Zion Gate," I do those for him and I get one for myself. "Flashing My Whip" is on the *Colombia Colly* album. Then we do "Hey you fat man, as you climb up you drop down." That song we do off of "Fatty Boom Boom." Aston Jennings [of the Meditators] was doing the harmony, both of us singing together. And the Heptones and me, we do "Satta Massa Ganna." That version is on *Colombia Colly*. One of the Gaylads, what's his name, Joe something, he sung on that one with Earl and Barry from Heptones. We do *Colombia Colly* and then we do a lot more songs, which is where I gone and do my thing from then. And just hang on until now. Because me and Scratch get in a fight over money business right on the street in front of the shop and people say, "Bwoy you never see nothing like two little men fight." [Laughter]

I do another track on *Colombia Colly* with a group which was Bagga Dread and a next guy, and they do a song called "Words." It was a very good song *[In fact, one of the greatest reggae songs ever written—MT]* but it never press up a lot. And I do the version name "Wisdom": "Jah shall protect my going out and my coming in. He lift up my eyes onto the hills from whence come my help. I have come from Jah which made heaven on earth. By his protection the sun shall not smite me by day nor the moon by night." That song they use it in the *Country Man* movie, which I never gave them the right neither. As you know nuff artists in Jamaica who only claims people's right and say is them write song. Song like even "Know Yourself Black Man." The original song is me write it as "Mother Cubba." Me and Meditators. My group. And later for Rupie Edwards me and Joe Higgs sing it and he say him write it.

And I say me write this Congo tune "Row Fisherman Row." We were over at Port Henderson beach and on Sunday we was on the beach. I saw a canoe passing, which him row with two stick. The old-time canoe, they row them with stick. So I say "row fisherman row" 'cause them was way out in the sea. Me used to love the sea Sunday morning time. So me say "row fisherman row, lot of hungry belly pickneys deh a shore." When I go up the studio and saw the artists them which was Congoes, me start singing song to them and me play the conga at the studio too. Upsetter wasn't there, so we intend that the Upsetter is the fisherman now and we the artists was the hungry belly pickney. At the shore, waiting till him come from town we get some money. [Laughter] Then as me leave, they record the song, but they don't know the meaning of it. Where it come from. They only sing it. I didn't do the recording of it, I only carry at the studio, and working it out while Upsetter wasn't there. And gone home. And the Congoes record it and say it is them write it. I have a lot of songs that I write which I never get credit for because I never know much about performing rights.

I do a lot songs which I don't really have line up in my brain right now. I hope to find copy back, 'cause most of the tapes them get messed through hurricane and move up and down while I was around. I lost some of those masters. But the rights of them, the original work, is mine.

But we do some great works at Upsetter studio. I like work for him too y'know cause him have vibes. In the song "Norman the Gambler" it's me doing the domino. "Roast Fish and Cornbread," Scratch ask me what I'd eaten, and the idea comes for a tune. So most ideas in studio like we're working together. Is a one person come with a idea, there's a body of people behind the idea. Nuff songs. Nuff song that people create them not even know where it come from. Scratch always had enough words. Like he call Max Romeo, White Belly Rat, and like him say he named the Ape. His name is the Ape y'know. He called me Jah Lion. I say, "why you call me Jah Lion?" and him say "you move strong." Might be physically or musically strong. But he called me Jah Lion different from Jah Lloyd....

The Beat vol:14, #1 1995

JAH LION
COLOMBIA COLLY
(Island-U.K. RRCD 47/524033-2, 1994)

There is a remarkable sequence in the 1977 documentary *Roots Rock Reggae*, the premier entry in Jeremy Marre's series of music films, *Beats of the Heart*. After a brief preamble describing the place of producer Lee "Scratch" Perry in the scheme of Jamaican music, accompanying establishing shots of his Washington Gardens home, the camera enters his studio, the Black Ark. A session is in progress, with Perry's studio band, the Upsetters, backing Junior Murvin, the Congos and others recording a song composed in honor of Marre's visit.

Initially, the camera tracks through the studio as the musicians work out the rhythm and the singers sketch out their parts, with Murvin occasionally glaring at someone who's either hit a bum note or, more likely, is drowning him out. The audience hears musical sounds, voices, guitars and drums which are clearly the product of human activity. Then an extraordinary thing happens: The camera travels through the control room window to glimpse Perry seated at his console. He is seen variously stabbing his four-track tape machine with a pencil, torturing the knobs of an effects box with both hands, flapping his arms with frustration, slapping himself on the face, hollering encouragement to the session players in a manner that would seem to obviate the need for a talk-back microphone and otherwise providing what might charitably be called visceral direction for the recording in progress.

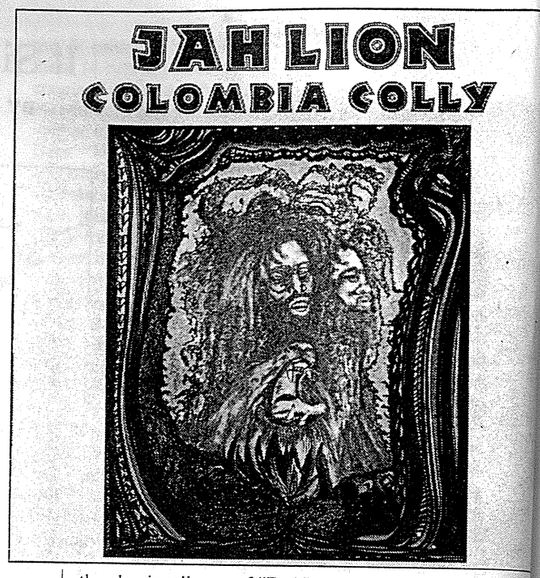
Within the booth, the sound changes completely: The half-dozen singers are compressed into a molten 1-beam of melody and the backing instruments resemble nothing so much as car horns heard well beyond a distant hill, insect swarms and the sounds between shortwave stations dialed up on a humid night. We are hearing the music as the product of technical manipulation and, more to the point, as Perry probably hears it every day without electronic enhancement. The camera crosses the blood-brain barrier of reggae, and provides a most graphic example of what theoretician Morse Peckham might describe as Lee Perry's rage for chaos.

The work of the best reggae producers usually begs to be considered single by single, as it was first released. Perry, in the mid-'70s, pulled off the unusual coup of scoring several hit albums, most of them backed by the second edition of his studio band, the Upsetters. These albums were all recorded in the Black Ark, and most were released domestically in the U.S. concurrent with their Jamaican issue. This last fact is most remarkable given that these records all featured Perry's mixing technique at its most byzantine. Some of Scratch's artists were pamphleteers and social-critics-in-song (Murvin, Max Romeo), some were crooners (George Faith) and some were djs such as Prince Jazzbo, whose "talkover" messages took the form of home-brewed scripture, shot through with apocalyptic pronouncements and spleen. Of the latter batch, none were scarier and more capable of turning a mood on a dime than Jah Lion.

As revealed in his own words in the last issue of *The Beat*, (Vol. 14 #1), the singer Jah Lloyd moonlighted as Jah Lion, his nom-de-dub bestowed by his producer. For a long time, fans of his album *Colombia Colly* assumed that Lee Perry was Jah Lion. Perry's photo is the only one featured on the sleeve, which doubtless gave rise to Stephen Davis' misattribution in his crucial book, *Reggae Bloodlines*. The album is a masterwork of studio weirdry, outdistancing the majority of dj and dub albums prized for their strangeness. As such, it is a singular achievement even within the bent canon of the Upsetter, but it was Jah Lloyd's toasting that articulated sentiments as shocking and unusual as any to be found in Lautréamont's *Maldoror*. And Scratch was just the guy to put it all to music.

In its original lp form, *Colombia Colly*, divided neatly into a Scary side and a Goofy side. When heard in the continuous program of a cd, these distinctions are blurred, with many of the childlike sing-a-longs of side two revealing their dark aspect. The sounds and lyrics originally grouped as side one seemed more intriguing at first, as I preferred the death-rattle vocals of "Flashing [My] Whip" and the title cut. Little of this is actually intelligible, mind you, save for the occasional "comes like a bony judge" and other shards from the Book of Revelations According to Rasta.

But the cd gives equal due to



the classic talkover of "Bad Luck Natty," with Jah Lion seguing from singing to rapping, punctuating each remark with an explosive "Tell you!" Boris Gardiner's bass grinds forward with inexorable malevolence, thudding like the mummy's footsteps in a Boris Karloff film. Scratch embroiders each track with the full catalog of dub effects: creaking doors, funereal wailing, the splash of a reverb unit dented by a hammer. The disc adds the essential "Soldier and Police War," Jah Lion's rap over the backing tracks to Junior Murvin's "Police and Thieves," hitherto available only on the English lp, *Scratch on the Wire*.

The song recorded for Marre's film, titled "Play On Mr. Music," was never issued insofar as I'm aware. But all of the elements described and then some are at one with Jah Lion's agenda on *Colombia Colly*. All too soon would pathology replace musical value as the focus of Lee Perry's recordings: The "mad genius" wound up simply mad, figuratively hitting a brick wall about 1978. To this end, his career bears tragic resemblance to that of Phil Spector or the Beach Boys' Brian Wilson, plunging from a peak of modernism and prolific innovation, with Scratch becoming reggae's poster child in the cause of willful self-destruction. But for three or four years, before the view was obscured by graffiti, one could glimpse another dimension, maybe the future of roots music, through the window of Scratch's control room. *Colombia Colly* was telegraphed from the furthest edge of that realm.

—Richard Henderson

ECHO chamber odysseys

Lee Perry is the original dub mystic, the liquidator, the one-drop upsetter, the Black Ark afronaut. For this exclusive interview, K Martin received an invitation to an audience with Perry who was on a brief visit to London. This is what happened. . .

"Mick Jagger, you are a *vampire*!" The voice casting the curse is eerie, strained and instantly recognisable. The latest victim of Lee Perry's historically documented vendettas seems ironically appropriate. In 1968, while The Rolling Stones were indulging in chic, calculated and highly publicised exercises in pop-radicalism with director Jean Luc Godard for the *One Plus One* film, Perry was working in music's shadows, beginning his explorations into the outer limits of sound that would have a more profound effect on the next 25 years of popular music's development than any number of cosmopolitan pub rock updates.

Having served his apprenticeship in the 60s studios of Coxsone Dodd and Joe Gibbs, produced Bob Marley's first recordings, influenced King Tubby and informed Adrian Sherwood's chaotic methodology, Lee 'Scratch' Perry has acted as reggae's spirit guide and its industry's perpetual thorn in the side for over three decades.

Throughout that time, he has adopted a number of cunning, pseudonymous personalities which have served as both self-protection devices and recyclable commodities in a notoriously shark infested economy. The Upsetter, Pipecock Jaxxon, The Duppy Conqueror: Perry has constructed a personal mythology that, in contemporary black music, is rivalled only by that of Sun Ra.

Born Rainford Hugh Perry, details of his date and place of birth remain obscure (although the place might be Hanover or St Mary). A country boy who moved to Kingston's urban sprawl, his childhood exposure to the Bible and the supernatural continues to haunt his music. One part seer, one part info-scrambler, Perry has produced some of dub's most disorientating moments, mostly working out of his legendary Kingston studio, Black Ark. Open to influences as diverse as James Brown, Motown, Ennio Morricone and The Beatles, Perry filters infinite info through the studio's hyperreality, filling dub's open spaces with primitive sound effects, animal noises and, most prophetically, TV soundbites on such revolutionary albums as *Dub Revolution* and *Super Ape*.

Perry now lives in the Babylonian heartland of Zurich. I met with him in March at London's Ariwa studios, where he was recording a new album with Neil 'Mad Professor' Fraser. Clutching a block of hash the size of a large pocket encyclopedia, sitting next to his personal inflatable globe which was reflected in the mirrors on his boots, his speech, like his music, was littered with revelatory observations, drop-dead one-liners and hallucinatory conjunctions. . .

KM: When you first got involved with Studio One, was it because it had been your earliest musical connection?

LP: In those days you have to be a tuffy, and to make it you have to be monster tuff. In those days Duke Reid [producer and owner of the legendary 60s Jamaican studio, Treasure Isle] and all those people were the tuffest guys. It was like those guys were makin' war all the time 'cause they wanted power. So Coxsone [Dodd, owner of Studio One] wasn't so tuff like Duke Reid, so he woulda give some time in the studio, to get in and listen for a laugh. And so my thing he was doin' for a laugh, he never knew it was serious. I had no problem with him, because it started off as a laugh and I wanted it to start off somewhere; to start a thing with a laugh so it can end as a laugh. If you start something with a laugh it will end as a laugh; if you start something with death it'll end with death.

When you worked with Duke Reid, was it as a tape op?

No, it was was one of those times when. . . He's a man who loved news. He wanted to be the news and he wanted to hear the news of what's happenin' all the time. Who's up and who's down? So that he could laugh. But those sorta people, I don't enjoy them; I don't enjoy people who laugh at the small people. I enjoy the people who try and share the view of the small people. Not the big giants.

So when you set up the Upsetter label, it wasn't because you were inspired by what you had seen Duke Reid do?

No, I called it the Upsetter label so I could upset everybody to create an upset.

Did it work?

Of course, as mad as what happen now.

When you brought out those early instrumentals like "Return Of Django", "Night Doctor"...

It was a series of gunfights from the OK Corral.

So they were inspired by Westerns?

Yeah, my mind in those days as a kid was strictly Texas. So me say, 'It's now not an illusion, I bring it to reality.' Because I am a painter. I paint it and it come alive. For Marley's portraits [on the sleeve of the Jamaican issue of the *Soul Revolution* album] I give him a [plastic toy] gun, I give Bunny [Wailer] a gun and I give Peter [Tosh] a gun. I have all the guns. I mean I am the gun controller. That's what I was showin' them.

When you chose to make instrumentals, was it to leave space for the imagination?

I am a rebel. I am a revolutionary. I revolt for the poor people. Otherwise I take up the form of Robin Hood several times.

Straight from The Magnificent Seven*?*

I love that. [Yells out loud] I am Robin Hood! Believe it or not, I am. If you 'ave to ask, who sent I? I sent myself.

How aware of Ennio Morricone's film scores for A Fistful Of Dollars*, etc, were you at the time?*

Yeah man. Those were the times I would be influenced by *A Fistful Of Dollars*. Gonna be a big shot or maybe at the OK Corral. Deal.

It sounded like you were trying to relocate Texas in outer space.

Of course, that was in space at that time. That was my reality. It was not a jest or a joke, that was real magic we put together. 'Cause we worked it out. And what we discover, the future is the brain of the children and it's all in comic stories.

Did you read sci-fi?

It's real, everything is real, that's no joke. It's no secret anymore.

So you were always looking to the future instead of reflecting the present?

Why would God hide his brain in a stupid old man? God can't take rotten brain, God have to take perfect brain to make perfect rain. Perfect breeze for perfect trees, to create men with perfect knees, to dance the blues. Heeeuuggh! [He makes a noise like the sound of a rhino in approval]

You must have been one of the first producers to work with King Tubby. How did you hear about him?

I didn't hear about him, he hear about me and come to join. They all hear about me and come to join me. I didn't hear about them. My world, my little magic world. I created a magic world, thought it was a joke and called it serious joke. So it was just goin' as a joke, but it was not a joke, it just had to be happiness. It was a serious thing baby, that you kill too much people and I'd of realised this. My little magic world so powerful, because it's music.

So you wanted your music to create a world with its own rules?

The music rule everybody. Every heart, the music takes over heart and thoughts. It takes over flesh and blood, spirit, body and soul. The music did that. Telepathically, we don't want to, so he say, 'OK listen, I am the music.' So he go right into your brain and come into your body and lives in you. Music is the only saviour of the Universe, it don't have to be any special music. It's not Christianity. One brotherhood, one sisterhood and love. We don't wanna deal with hate. We see hate as a terrible enemy, so we try to penalise hate and make hate nonexistent. You gotta be perfect, 135 per cent strong. To prepare 134,000 saints for God. Breeze when invisible.

When I heard "Bird In Hand" (From Return Of Super Ape*) it sounded like a preacher's hymn. The Smokey Robinson of the cloth. Listening to you talk now, it's as if the church and gospel...*

I love Smokey Robinson. I love his voice.

Do you mind that people generally seem to acknowledge you for your production rather than as a singer?

I wouldn't mind what they want me to. Whatsoever the people want me for, I owe them that responsibility, whatever they want. I am their humble servant. I'm ready to give.

With "Bird In Hand" you sang higher than I'd heard you sing before.

It's when the spirit come, then I don't wait because I hear somebody unusual appear, so I accept whatever appear. I believe in spirits. I believe in the invisible.

So you believe in ghosts?

In the invisible and I believe in the visible. The two of us here are talking right now. My words are speaking to you and are invisible, as are my Father, my God, my King. He didn't write anything, he just keep tryin' and I believe in him and his Royal manifest.

Is this how dub came about for you? As a music of spirits, a music of ghosts?

Definitely, definitely. We were havin' trouble makin' riddims, and to get the ones we were searchin' for... It was too messed up, the musicians weren't havin' a clean mind. So when I'm with 'em in the studio, they have a confused mind, playin' confused music. So I decide how to get the spirits to do it through drum and bass. Call in different musicians and dub in different feelings. Then you'll have perfect love and no confusion. So Tubby's them hear it, them love it. He decided to join me 'cause he knows it's new, and 'im wants new things if it's soundin' good.

Reggae's search for the new is what makes it exciting for me, but in the late 70s it seemed to get more reactionary.

I believe in my words. I was in England one time [late 70s] and there was a new vibration, because that one vibration is waitin' to escape. And the punks like the reggae. And we were here to spiritualize the punky reggae party. Bob [Marley] was here at the same time, and while we were here we recorded in Chris Blackwell's [head of Island records] studio, but it didn't sound like what I want so I had to go back to Joe Gibbs's studio in Jamaica and hire different musicians. That was a big connection I made. Call it a punky reggae party. But it wasn't a party for me; it was a party for Chris Blackwell.

You talk a lot about vampires...

Of course he is.

Did you feel your inventions were being taken from you?

Definitely. That's what happens, he takes the party. And Jambo, Trojan, EMI, they all take the party. That's why I form a new Universal party.

You had a major fall-out with Blackwell. Was it after Super Ape*?*

I think so. He want everything. I was creatin' a jungle vibration; I wanted to have a secret music in my studio, that I didn't want to go outside. I love to have secret tapes. So if there's anything on them when I need fresh ideas, me have something to check on. When you need money and you don't have money, they'll give you money to take away the little thing that you don't even want exposed. Because them want to take the fuckin' glory and say it's them that exposed it. Them create it, and them just want power.

So why did you release From The Secret Laboratory *on Island nearly a decade later?*

Something have to happen. Some music explosion, some vital connection. Because it got to be that the rap was gettin' stronger, 'cause the rappin' was comin' on very good. The Secret Laboratory that's where they got their feelin' from. So that was a must.

When you set up your Black Ark studio in the 60s, it was after the Martin Luther King/Malcolm X assassinations and during a fragmentory period of black nationalism. Did that influence your choice of studio name?

Yeah, because the original word for it is 'Noah'. But I believe in black culture, and they were sayin' that Jesus was black, white only through stupidness and prejudice. It caused big problems. To say he is white is all shit, the colour was shadow black.

When you set up Black Ark...

[Interrupting] I was identifying with shadow. The shadow of the almighty creator is black.

When you set up the studio, what did it look like? What equipment?

Like Heaven, Heaven on Earth.

Was it similar to the Ariwa complex here?

It was like Heaven on Earth. It was like a bubblin' gumpot. You could feel the bubbles. If you pushed hard enough you could feel goo and glue. A magic fuckin' gumpot.

You were one of the earliest producers to explore studio sound effects. Was it the magical, illusory qualities of those effects that attracted you?

I hear sounds inside my head — I don't know where they come from; I would not ask. But I will put them to tape as far as I hear them. But I wouldn't dare ask where they come from, because I know they've been comin' from the beginning to the very ending, and from the last to the first.

When you first introduced dub, especially the earliest Black Ark productions, was it to show the music needn't have only one form?

I introduced dub because I knew it was the roots of the heartbeat. The drum represent your heartbeat, the bass represent your mind or brain. I'm a heart and brain protector, and I'm a projector. I'm also an inspector, a director and imitator. The Liquidator and Exterminator.

Was it the 'science' that attracted you to dub? Becoming integrated with the machines?

Of course. Why not? I design it. I wanted it to be so. To be spiteful to some musicians who weren't playing from the heart. They were so fuckin' corrupted. I said I was gonna get equal with them. I wanna be with machines.

So you wanted to work with machines because the musicians couldn't translate what you wanted?

It wasn't clean enough in there. We were creating cannibals instead of human beings.

Is that what's so attractive about working in the studio: answering to no one, becoming the centre of your own universe?

I discover what I created was cannibal beings. I thought, 'Oh fuck, what am I doing now? Creating some anti-human?' Some grabbed coke and some grab needle.

How did you discover new studio technology?

Hear what I'm sayin'... I was working with angels and ghosts. I don't work with human beings, I was using spirits to manifest my dreams. I believe in so few humans, because they're so weak. Because they are freaks. That's why witches grow beaks, but I'm sitting on the mountain peak. I dare not grow old, I grow weak. At the beginning, at the end I shall turn into a freak. I have no fear, I'm in first gear. I don't go backward, I go forward. Presto.

Was dub dealing with space: inner, outer or structural?

I dub from inner space to outer space. This is an interview, but how come this interview is coming from my *inner*view? So this is my inside to the world outside. Here come my inside to you outside. From my living world.

Why do you think it's so tempting to talk about dub in terms of mysticism and outer space?

I tell you, because it's the heartbeat and the mindpower.

Is it because it deals with mutation and transportation?

When you hear dub you fly on the music. You put your heart, your body and your spirit into the music, you gonna fly. Because if it wasn't for the music, oppression and taxes would kill you. They send taxes and oppression to hold you, a Government to tell you what to do and use you like a robot. You are then the Pinocchio and do their bidding. So they will torment you to death. So when you hear dub you hide from the fuckers there.

> **"Black Ark was like a bubblin' gumpot. If you pushed hard enough you could feel goo and glue. A magic fuckin' gumpot"**

Lee 'Scratch' Perry headlines a reggae all-dayer at Stanmer Park, Lewes Road, Brighton on 29 May. This is a rare, exclusive UK performance by the dub king heading up a bill that includes names drawn from across the spectrum of 90s reggae and dub, including The Mighty Diamonds, U Roy, Junior Reid, Linton Kwesi Johnson with Dennis Bovell, Mad Professor, Dread Zone, Zion Train, Kassa, Danny Red, and Jah Shaka Sound System. 2pm–11pm; tickets £16 from Ticketmaster (0171 344 4444) and similar outlets; info on 01273 678154.

The WIRE
May 1995

Dubble madness

Ever since its Jamaican beginnings, dub has always had a built-in wacky factor. The extra layers of mixing and manipulating done by studio herbheads to the majestic reggae played by herbhead musicians added up to a dubble-whammy of weirdness, where the maddest mix got the most respect. And the reunion of two generations of dub pioneers, Neil Fraser (the Mad Professor) and Lee 'Scratch' Perry (mad by reputation) will be a guarenteed mindblower.

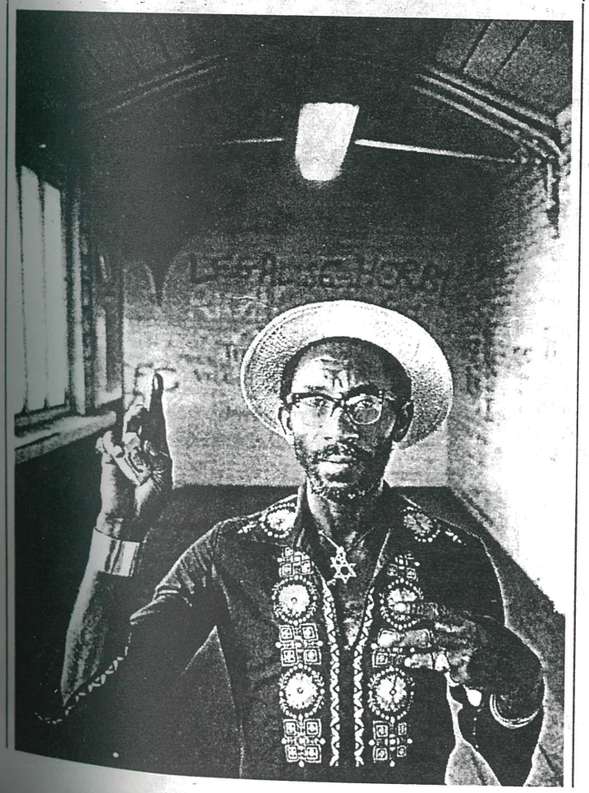
They first recorded together in early '80s England, after Perry, the Great Upsetter, had trashed his legendary Jamaican Black Ark studios, ripped down the refrigerator he had bolted on the wall and toaster which signified he was the Cool Toaster, and had by that time based himself in Amsterdam. Here, he nurtured a healthy insanity. He cancelled shows because certain equipment had bad vibes and his albums took on an increasingly outerspace nature. But people kept booking him. After all, he and his backing band the Skatalites did help pioneer ska in the '60s when he was a writer-producer for Coxsome Dodd's studio. Perry's productions for his own Upsetter label, which included the first Wailers albums, King Tubby's early dub albums and hundreds of classic singles earned him high praise from Bob Marley, among others, who called him a genius.

His student, the Guyana-born Mad Professor, established himself in Punky-Reggae England at a time when the Clash were covering the Perry-produced Junior Murvin single 'Police and Thieves'. The Professor started Ariwa Sounds in 1979, where he proved himself capable, even, of turning punks like The Ruts into a bonafide dub band. Ariwa, the Yaruba word for communication, is now a 48-track studio with more than 100 releases to its credit, including the 'Dub me Crazy' compilation series, the dub-roots reggae of DJ Macka B and the ear candy sounds of lovers' rock. The Professor's also done noteworthy remixes for Massive Attack and the Orb – the new descendents of dub.

The show at the Paradiso will feature Lee 'Scratch' Perry doing his funky-surreal rants of sex and injustice to the back-up of the roots rocking Robotniks, with the Mad Professor mixing up the madness from behind the desk. It will be a righteous jaw-dropper.

Steve Korver

Lee Perry and the Mad Professor play the Paradiso on Wednesday 3.



MON 29 MAY - REGGAE ALL-DAYER
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LINTON KWESI JOHNSON
with the DENNIS BOVELL Dub Band
MAD PROFESSOR (live dub set)
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DANNY RED
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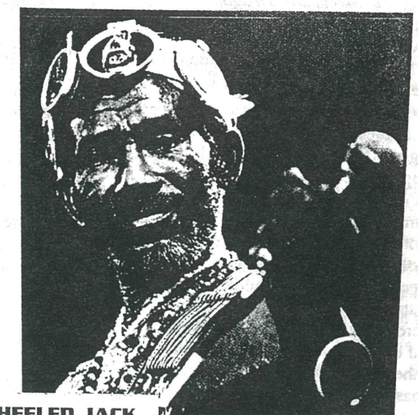
LEE 'SCRATCH' PERRY
Exclusive UK Show

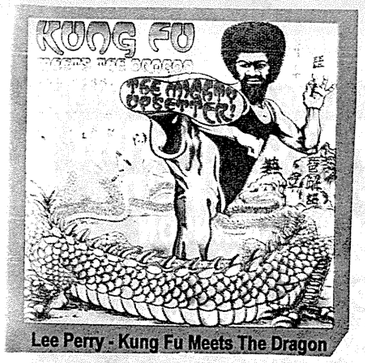
Reggae festival in Brighton, England
May 29th, 1995

New Musical Express 1 July 1995



SPRING HEELED JACK
Lee Perry
(Rough Trade/One Little Indian)

JAZZ JUNGLE, Latin jungle and now, believe it or not, SURF jungle? Well, we'd better get to grips with it, because Spring Heeled Jack – better known for their more moody, melancholic jungle efforts – have come up with the perfect pop-jungle record of the summer. It samples Kraftwerk, it nestles just the right side of noveltyland and it deserves to be Number One forever. Biz agrees. Biz: "An amazing record. It's still good as jungle, it's still good at pop without being crap at either. I don't know what the reaction from jungle people will be, but there are so many dance records with just the same very limited range of influences, it's good to hear something like this."



Lee Perry - Kung Fu Meets The Dragon

LEE PERRY AND THE UPSETTERS

KUNG FU MEETS THE DRAGON

(Justice League-U.K./Ravensquire JL 5000, 1995)

In the mid 1970s, four albums and a number of singles produced by Lee Perry were released on Dennis Harris' DIP label in the U.K. As the albums were issued in limited numbers, sometimes in pre-release format with a blank label, no sleeve, and basically no information, they have entered the realm of legend, with much uncertainty surrounding their particulars (especially outside of the U.K). The albums were *DIP Presents the Upsetter*, a collection of DIP single hits; *Return of Wax*, a minimalist dub album of rhythm in its purest form; *Musical Bones*, a trombone lp said to feature Rico (although some have claimed Vin "Don D. Jr." Gordon AKA Trommie); and *Kung Fu Meets the Dragon*, an album that skates the fine line between instrumental and dub.

Now 20 years after its original release, Ravensquire Records of Birmingham has repackaged *Kung Fu* to present it on vinyl with its original front cover, but with a couple of complimentary bonus tracks, and on cd with even more bonus tracks thrown in. This album is a quirky collection of odd rhythms, stripped down to a raw edge and then given mind-bending treatments by Scratch to force them more away from conventionality and eventually moor them firmly in the realm of sound. In this sense, it has some similarities with *Revolutions Dub* (which Scratch did soon after), but *Kung Fu* is less dubonic, emphasizing instead the inclusion of melodica, harmonica and clavinet in its rhythms.

Thematically, this album reflects the Upsetter's shift away from a fascination with Westerns towards the dexterity of kung fu and karate flicks. In fact, all of the vocals on this record attest to this in some way or other. "Enter the Dragon" (not on the original release but poached from *DIP Presents the Upsetter*) has Scratch proclaiming "Rahtid!" as he enters the dragon itself, riding a dub cut of Joy White's "Lady Lady" and aided by a sliding whistle. Later, "Kung Fu and Wong Jah Low" are "Entering the Heart of the Dragon"; the rhythm is hard, and the going must be rough based on all the reverberated shrieking coming from the echo chamber of the dragon's bowels.

"Flames of the Dragon" burn us raw as Scratch goes completely over the top, giving us a sense-surround aural demonstration of the second hottest thing after Jah fire, while another bonus comes in the form of "Black Belt Jones, the Prince of Karate" with his kung fu thrusts over the Versatiles' "Cutting Razor," a song apparently originated by Joe Higgs (and later made famous by Peter Tosh as "Stepping Razor.")

Incidentally, the whistling on this tune sounds similar to that on a track called "Extraordinary Dub" on the Impact lp *Java Java Dub*. The "Kung Fu Man" Linval Thompson (or Linval Spencer as he was credited at the time) gives the only proper singing on this disc, this time slightly dubbed-out with additional synth lines put on it. Even a highly phased version of a song based on Roy Shirley's "Hold Them" gets changed into a karate chant, with ghostly harmonies chanting directionally.

The melodica playing is credited to the young Augustus Pablo, and it is interesting to note that much of the playing here is not typical Pablo; somehow the Upsetter has taken him over, and gets a different response from his instrument. This album shows Scratch as an originator, with his unique approach to music and his unknown and inimitable scientific sound treatments. The lp has been issued this time around in a limited edition with shocking orange vinyl, which may have an appeal for some, but the cd bonus tracks may make it a better choice in the long run. Whatever the case, in light of all the bogus and hastily issued pirate material that ends up being attributed to his name, it is refreshing to have some bonafide Lee Perry rarities resurfacing and obtainable again.

[Distributed by Ernie B's Reggae, (916) 939-0691.]

—By David Katz

Lee Perry, *The Quest*

Not much bang for your buck here. *The Quest* is a miscellany composed of four really good singles (artists uncredited), exorbitantly padded by five alternative versions of "Curly Locks." Worth buying if you're not on a budget and don't own copies of Linval Thompson's cracked-up "Kung Fu Man," the Silvertones' sweet "When Knotty Came," the version side of Junior Byles' "Long Way" or Big Youth's "Johnny Reggae" (which was actually produced by Roy Shirley).

MICHAEL TURNER

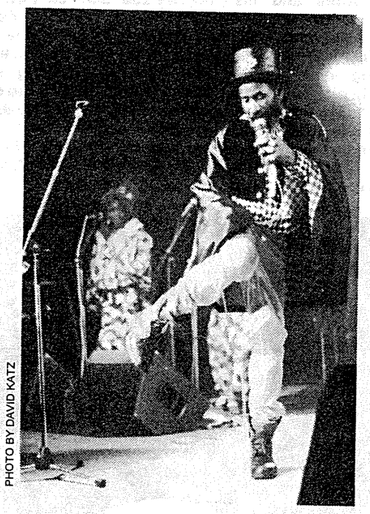


PHOTO BY DAVID KATZ

SCRATCH IN RARE FORM ON STAGE AT L'ELYSEE MONTMARTRE, PARIS, NOVEMBER 1987.

NEWS & REVIEWS

Since its initial release in Jamaica in 1977, the Congos' debut album Heart of the Congos has never diminished in popularity. The impact of its initial pre-release pressing was such that it would eventually surface in many different forms in several different nations. This myriad of different pressings has led to much confusion surrounding the different presentations of the album. Along with an examination of the album's content, this article seeks to alleviate some of the confusion by tracing the various pressings of the disc, to highlight the differences and similarities of each. I hope this will clarify exactly what has been issued and make plain precisely what is currently available.

By David Katz

Out of Africa Comes the Congoman

The amazing tale of Heart of the Congos

Several elements combined to make this an exceptional album still favored today by roots music fans around the globe. First, there are the song writing talents of Cedric Myton and Roy Johnson, the founding members of the group. Cedric particularly imparts a visionary quality to his words, painting a musical canvas of everything from the life of the "Fisherman" and "Congoman" to the "Solid Foundation" of Rastafari versus the hypocritical "Wrong Thing" of destructive Christianity. Roy manages to make use of religious allegory in a way that is never stale or ordinary, be it in his vision of "Sodom and Gomorrow," the 30 pieces of silver that "sold Jah Rasta" on "La La Bam Bam," or the deliciously obscure "Noah Sugar Pan" eulogized on "Ark of the Covenant."

When I spoke to Cedric recently by telephone, he told me that he met Roy through contact with people like the producer Leggo Beast and the top ranking dj Big Youth. The duo's vocal partnership formed the perfect vehicle for their interesting lyrics. Cedric's falsetto raises the songs to higher heights, and his seasoned delivery reminds us that his singing career stretches from the days of rock steady (when he was a member of the Tartans) to the roots era (when he contributed to some of the Royal Rasses' most memorable works). Roy, who had been active with Nyahbinghi groups like Ras Michael's Sons of Negus and the Rightful Brothers (formed by a repeater drum player called Brother Joe) has a strong tenor that provides a fitting contrast to Cedric's upper tones.

On the album, a fuller vocal chorus was provided by the great harmonizing of the Meditations, with additional input from Gregory Isaacs and Full Experience vocal trio member Candy McKenzie. Also present was the baritone anchor of future full-time Congos member Watty Burnett (AKA "King Burnett"), of whom Cedric says "It's only 'Fisherman' he did work on. After that album we consider Watty Burnett, and we work with him on the second album, *Congo Ashanti*." Cedric also pointed out that his wife Yvonne co-wrote some of the songs on the album: "I really should endorse my wife for some of the works that we put together. At that time, her name not even mentioned, but on *Heart of the Congos*, she did some of the work. . . . She's a writer; both of us work together."

Then there are the players of instruments. At the core, Mikey Boo and Sly provide the beat, peppered by plenty of percussion from Scully; melodic yet surprisingly intense bass lines from

Boris Gardner; atmospheric organ from the late great Winston Wright; macka piano from "Fat Keith" Sterling; sparse rhythm guitar from Robert "Billy" Johnson; and typically expressive lead guitar from true veteran axe man Ernest Ranglin. Other noted session men appear on some tracks, including the multi-instrumentalist Geoffrey Chung (who, sadly, has recently passed away) and his brother, Mikey "Mao" Chung. The crew members on this musical ship were among the top players of the day, providing a textured backing for the Congos' vocal dynamism and lyrical spirituality. Cedric recalls there was "a great feeling itself, between all the musicians. It was a great experience for me myself, for even after doing the lead vocals, I go back and do background vocals too...it's just a whole vibration."

The final necessary element in the creation of the work was the man who could pull all the other elements together, to get the music into a form where it would make an impact on the outside world. This man, of course, was none other than the Black Ark skipper himself, Lee "Scratch" Perry. When the album was recorded, Scratch was approaching what many believe to be his artistic apex. Refining his easily identifiable yet eminently inimitable Black Ark sound, Scratch was delving further into the realm of sound with then-unknown applications of echoplex and phasing, dropping sounds and rhythms in and out of the mix, and adding spontaneous bursts of his own Africa-inspired percussion.

The location of the Congos under Scratch's guidance at the Ark produced not only what is arguably the best music of their career, but also a disc that is possibly the most interesting Scratch-produced album of a vocal group. As Blood and Fire head honcho Steve Barrow notes, "*Heart of the Congos* is together with Bob Marley and the Wailers' *Natty Dread*, Burning Spear's *Marcus Garvey*, and the Mighty Diamonds' *Right Time*, a definitive statement of Jamaican vocal group artistry. It is exemplary roots music of the highest order. It is also the most perfectly realized album to come from Lee Perry's Black Ark."

Cedric says he first met Scratch in the late '60s, sometime after the demise of the Tartans. "I know Scratch from longer time, even before he hook up with Bob [Marley] and all of that, from the Downbeat days. We used to work at the Studio One studio, pay our money and make songs, me and Devon Russell, working on our own material. Those songs never been released.... [Perry] used to be one of Coxsone's men, he used to be around Coxsone those days. We meet all over still, for Jamaica is a small place. When you're in the music business, you only have so many places to go." After forming the Congos, Cedric says he and Roy planned "to do an album. Then I really check Perry, and we all go in and check Perry together.

Several elements combined to make this an exceptional album still favored today by roots music fans around the globe.

Original Congomen:
Roy Johnson and Cedric Myton.

You know, Perry have a little thing about him, musically, as a musical scientist. Upsetter, he really is a very powerful musician, he have a feel for producing. He was still nice, but he was stern when he was doing his work. If it would take him the whole day, he's going to finish the work."

I asked Cedric about some particulars regarding the recording of the songs, beginning with the first song, which had to be recorded twice. "That was 'Fisherman.' The first day...I think we could get a better vibe. We catch ourselves, talk about it, and we kick out some musicians, but that was an experience in itself. It was about what was happening in my life at that time, like you see [the lyrics]: 'Three kids on the floor,' there was three kids sleeping on the floor at that time, 'and another one' was on the way 'to make four.' So it was my own insert, a personal thing. And at that time, we were living in the 'seaport town,' the old harbor. It's like a picture painting." Cedric remembers how the next song, "Congoman," uses "a different bass. That bass was played by Winston Wright. When we was in the studio, I'm not quite sure if Boris [Gardiner] was there, but Scratch say 'Winston, I prefer you to play this bass.' He put a lot of influence in the work... I think we did about six songs that day, that song steal the show."

One of the most moving songs for me is "Solid Foundation," so I asked Cedric about the inspiration for it. "'Solid Foundation' was my first song that was even written in that period, getting back in the groove, for after Tartans and after certain period I take a break. It's a spiritual song, telling about His Majesty, 'living in a solid foundation, for no matter what the people of the world might say, I and I holding onto Jah, solid as a rock.' It's the foundation of our faith."

I also asked Cedric about the images of Africa that are so prevalent throughout this album and the work of the Congos in general. "I am a culture artist who just deals with cultural music. And I am a Rastaman, so I deal with strictly the culture, strictly the Rasta culture, strictly the African culture. I portray that it in my music as a major key, spiritually, musically, physically, culturally. My whole family: my children, my kids, my wife, brethrens, everybody, we just live the culture way."

When I asked Cedric how he feels he can maintain a link to a place he has not physically reached yet, he said "These things is an inward born conception. Our main thing is repatriation, we have to think of going back to Africa, and a centralization movement. Right now, we're in the motion of organizing the centralization of the unification of all the Rasta people, not only in America, but universally, right over the world."

◆◆◆◆◆◆

In terms of the actual release of the work, it is worth noting that this album has already been pressed at least seven different times on vinyl, and twice more on cd. With the exception of one vinyl re-press and one cd re-press, each pressing is somewhat different from the rest. I want to emphasize that the first pressing is very different from the others in that it has a totally different mix; all subsequent pressings use a second, alternate mix. It should also be noted that most of the different pressings vary in length.

The first pressing with the unique mix appeared in limited number in 1977 on a Jamaican Black Art label. The jacket of this original issue has blue stripes framing the photo on the front, whereas all others have black stripes. It also has a number of typographical errors on the back cover: organ is credited to Winston Riley instead of Winston Wright, and Keith Sterling is listed as Keith Stewart. The disc's actual label, which is cream-colored with black lettering, lists the album as *Heart of the Congo Man* by "The Congoes" (the matrix number is LP 4049). For those who have heard only one mix of this album, the difference between this original mix and all later ones is quite startling. Perhaps the easiest thing to spot in the original mix is the absence of the mooing cow on "Children Crying" and "Ark of the Covenant." The piano is also much higher in the mix throughout, and the presentation of vocals and percussion is different from later versions, particularly on "Open Up the Gate," where some prominent bells can be heard. There is not much delay on the vocals or phasing of the keyboards, and a section of "Congoman" sounds like it has a tape fault or rough edit left in the mix. The total running time of the songs (excluding gaps) is just under 46 minutes.

In early 1978, for reasons that are not entirely clear to me at present, Perry pressed the album a second time on his Black Art label, this time with a completely different mix. When I asked Cedric about this, he said "Perry did more than one mix. Perry did that on all the songs. That was just a tradition." Perhaps Perry thought that the original mix could be improved upon, or maybe the original mix-down had been lost. What-

ever the case, this mix is clearly different from the first. The piano is far fainter; the vocals, keyboards and guitar are bathed in excessive doses of delay; some songs roll on into extended dub mixes; and manic percussion and cow sounds had been added. The total running time of this second pressing is just over 53 minutes. This pressing would form a kind of blueprint for all subsequent pressings, although most would be shortened, and some would have differences of timbre and pitch (probably just due to being mastered on different machines, but possibly augmented through studio post-production techniques).

Sometime around the pressing of this second disc, the Congos and Perry had a falling out. When interviewed by David Rodigan on Capital Radio in London a while later, Scratch said that the song "Evil Tongues" (from his great *Roast Fish* album) had been directed at the Congos. It is hard to know if he wrote the song specifically about the group, or if he was just being flippant with this remark, but he said "The song based upon the Congos, their attitude—dreadlocks—what you call it? Vampires. Sorcerers. People who keep or hold blessed people and nature's work to ransom."

Of course, the Congos were not the first to be denounced by Perry, nor were they the first to be dissatisfied with Scratch's business ethics. Cedric now has nothing but praise for Scratch, and seems to hold no grudge against him. "We owe him a lot, he really did a great work...It's not a matter of friction. At the time, Perry was going into a different dimension, or direction, in other words. Certain things used to come up on him that maybe he can't control; spiritually, he was going in a different direction."

When they parted company with Perry, the Congos quickly issued their own pressing of the album on their newly formed Congo Ashanty label. To ensure that the ball of confusion surrounding the disc would roll with greater momentum, some copies of the Congo Ashanty pressing surfaced in Black Art record sleeves, seeming to be identical to the second Black Art press. Although it uses the same mix as the second Black Art issue, the Congo Ashanty pressing is by far the shortest version of the album even pressed, with a total running time of about 34 minutes. "Fisherman" is the only song left close to its full length; all the others fade out early. Side two gets particularly short shrift, with songs such as "Sodom and Gomorrow" being bumped down to half their previous lengths. Sound quality is also particularly rough on this pressing, so those who have this pressing only may feel they have missed a lot.

A version of the album was also pressed in France in 1979 on the Jah Live label, with most songs longer than the Congo Ashanty and imprint, but still not quite as long as on the second Black Art pressing. The back cover of the French issue featured the lyrics to all the songs, plus the information that "Congoman" is "dedicated to the Black Nation," while "The Wrong Thing" is "dedicated to the Pope of Rome." Although the sleeve's claim that "This album contains the original and never released mixings of *Heart of the Congos*" was not strictly accurate, it is worth noting that "Solid Foundation" was longer than on previous issues, clocking in at close to the five-minute mark. The pressing also seems to emphasize the treble end of the sound spectrum, particularly on side two. The disc's total running time is just under 44 minutes. In 1981, a pressing appeared in England on the Go Feet label with a total time of about 41 minutes. Still shorter than the first Jamaican and French editions, but longer than the Congo Ashanty, this pressing has a more even quality of sound.

At some point, the album appeared again in Jamaica on the Sunfire label, basically identical to the second Black Ark pressing. When I asked Cedric about this edition, he said "I don't know nothing about that. There was a lot of piracy involved, mainly by Pauline ['Isha' Morrison, Scratch's Jamaican wife]. We'll catch them all one day."

It has been said that Cedric and Roy had some differences themselves in the early '80s, with supposed allegations of *obeah* dealings being flung at each other. Whatever the case, Roy left the group to pursue a solo career as Congo Ashanty Roy, and the Congos eventually ceased to be active. When I asked Cedric about Roy's departure, all he would say was "That was the time that Roy have to go. These things do happen in life sometimes, like when the wine get ripe." Throughout the '80s, not much was heard of the Congos in general, although many of us hoped that the group might consider a reformation. As the '90s rolled around, VP records in the U.S. issued *Heart of the Congos* on cd. Although it uses the same standard second mix, it was mastered at a faster tempo than previous editions. It clocks in at around 43½ minutes. *Heart of the Congos* has also surfaced on a cd on the Spalax label in France, identical to the Jah Live vinyl pressing, something Cedric said he was not aware of.

Whether or not you've already managed to obtain a copy of this album, there is now some good news for us all. After making arrangements with Cedric and Roy earlier this year. Blood and Fire have gone back to the master tapes to present a repackaged *Heart of the Congos* that is longer, cleaner and brighter than it has ever sounded before. The songs have been restored to the full potential lengths as heard on the second Black Art pressing, and "Solid Foundation" here appears longer than on any previous album pressing, just under six minutes. They have also spent considerable time and effort cleaning up the sound. To hear the Blood and Fire pressing is to hear the album with new ears. As Cedric puts it, "This one that Blood and Fire have is the real deal."

Along with this full-length enhanced version of the disc (over 55 minutes long), Blood and Fire have added the rare 12" Upsetter Disco Cork mix of "Nicodemus," (a chilling composition from "Jah Sedrick" also taken from an original master tape), plus the often-sought but long-scarce Biblical epic "At the Feast" (an extra 11 minutes of music). All this is available on cd and double-gatefold lp, but vinyl junkies, take note: The cd release includes a bonus cd of rare Perry-produced material, namely the Island 12" versions of "Congo Man" and its dub, "Congo Man Chant" (again taken from master tapes), plus 7" dub cuts of "Fisherman" and "Ark of the Covenant," and the Disco Cork extended version of "Solid Foundation" thrown in for good measure (a total bonus of 26 minutes).

The best thing about the bonus cd is that it highlights Scratch's exceptional skills of remixing. how Scratch can always show other sides of songs we may think we know inside out. Scratch's ability to transform vocal lines into mantric stabs of wordless sound is stunning on these versions, particularly on "Congoman Chant" and on the dub portion of "Solid Foundation."

As usual. the packaging is lavish, thanks to the conceptual artistry of Mat Cook at Intro, which particularly pleased Cedric. "There's a lot of work that has gone into that, spiritual work. Things that I wasn't even thinking of, Blood and Fire come right up, at the surface. Some artwork that Blood and Fire dig up really untouchable." The biographical and technical research put into the project was also extensive, further illuminated by quotes from Cedric to put the making of the music in its proper context. In short, this is what we have come to expect from Blood and Fire: rare. quality material, sanctioned by the artists who receive their share of the profits, lovingly presented in creative packaging.

The positive footnote with which I will end is that Cedric says he has reformed the Congos, with himself, Watty Burnett and his old spar Lindburgh Lewis (who also was a member of the Tartans). "We've done about three shows, most of them is charity. The first one was just I and Watty, for the "MTV Unplugged," about four months ago, with the 809 Band." I asked Cedric how he would feel about Roy also rejoining the band. Again, his reply was brief: "If Roy have to come, if it's so, it will be so. I can't make any fight, if it have to be so, it will be so."

On a more certain note, Cedric also said he is about to release some new material, some of it recorded with the original Wailers band. "A new album that is finished, produced by me and my wife, recorded in Jamaica and New York, at Tuff Gong and Blue Mountain. We have the original Wailers doing about three tracks on this album, both Family Man, and I think that was the last of Carlton Barrett. We're going to put out a single, "Seeking A Favor" off of that album. The album is *I Believe in Music*." Hence, beside the Blood and Fire re-press of the Congos' classic debut, we now have new material to look forward to as well. The return of Cedric Myton and the Congos marks a happy day for roots music—long may they reign.

Thanks to Steve Barrow and Bob Harding of Blood and Fire, Ray Hurford, Micke Tsiparis, and Glen Lockley of Distant Drums *for assistance and information.*

Although rumors he would tour this year turned out to be just that (rumors), the original Upsetter returns with **Lee "Scratch" Perry and Mad Professor's *Black Ark Experiments*** (Ariwa/RAS), a quirky concoction that runs the gamut from scatological ("Poop Song," "Super Ape in Good Shape") to inspired ("Heads of Government," "From Heaven Above"). The combination of these two electronic zen genius/weirdos has produced two great previous albums (and the combination of their names has produced two piss-poor bootlegs neither had anything to do with—as Mad Pro told me, "some guy needed some money for Christmas and used our names") and this one continues to explore the outer reaches of reggae where saner souls have not dared to wander.

Particularly outrageous are the tracks "Thank You," one of those Perry laundry list litanies like his previous Christmas and New Year's greetings, and stream-of-unconsciousness "Jungle Safari" ("Blue supermarkets...Garvey's briefcase/Aliens in outer space..."). As on previous releases this pair of musical pataphysicians Alfred Jarry would have been well pleased with bring out the best in each other and all the rest of us can do is stand around with our mouths open and listen. Also "new" on the Perry front is ***Kung Fu Meets the Dragon***, featuring long-unavailable Upsetter recordings from the mid-'70s (thoroughly explored last issue by David Katz and now on cd from Esoldun/ROIR). These are some of the "classic" recordings (with the Barrett brothers) that helped make Perry a cult. *Black Ark Experiments* is the latest work to show he's still as fascinating as ever.

BY CHUCK FOSTER

MOJO Feb.1996

HEART OF THE CONGOS
BLOOD AND FIRE

- *First CD issue of classic Lee Perry-produced album from 1977.*
- *Released on double-LP with two extra tracks, or double-CD with five.*

NO SINGLE CUT ON *Heart Of The Congos* would make a Scratchhead's Top 20 from Lee Perry's extraordinary mid-'70s purple patch at Black Ark studios. Yet because the album is just that – an album, complete, resolved, uncauterised by Scratch's odd appetites and limited resources – it has deservedly achieved the imprimatur of classic.

Full-length albums were not the standard issue from that magic bunker, as witness the available supply of motley (and fabulous) compilations of bits, bobs and versions galore documenting one of the great socio-musical serendipities of the age. For two years, Black Ark contrived to be the beautiful accident that actually happened.

All the trademark sounds are here, compressed onto murky two-track: shallow, foggy bass, popping rim-shots, ambiguous squelching, cosmic moos, rotating phase and reverb melting everything into everything else, as if the finished tapes had been left out in the sun too long. On top, The Congos pipe like children on a suitable range of Old Testament themes – Sodom, Gomorrah and metaphors too elliptical to square up without a theology degree. Yes, it's a classic. One you might conceive of in a dream but never in a month of rational Sundays. **NICK COLEMAN**

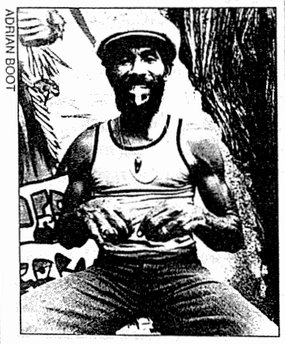
LEE PERRY
'SUPER APE IN THE JUNGLE'
(Ariwa) LP/CD Out now

The Upsetter, dub inventor and all round reggae legend gets the jungle treatment courtesy of the Mad Professor, Juggler and Dougie Digital – the team responsible for the recent Mazaruni and Rapuni Safari albums.

NEWS & REVIEWS

Lee Perry
Larks From The Ark
(Nectar Masters)

Few modern producers in any genre can claim to match the sounds minted by Lee 'Scratch' Perry (pictured below) in his Black Ark Studio during the militant and spiritually buoyant '70s. The collection of tracks here, featuring impeccable vocalists including George Faith, The Jolly Brothers and Prodical, testify to the continuing power of reggae as a healing balm, political force and mood-enhancer. **8** *(DF)*


ADRIAN BOOT

VOX December 1995

AUGUSTUS PABLO
CLASSIC ROCKERS
(Island Jamaica 162-539 953-2, 1995)

In a better world, the need for yet another Augustus Pablo compilation would never be questioned. His clavinet playing underpins many of the greatest rhythms of '70s reggae. His productions for his own Rockers label added several talents to the pantheon of Jamaican vocalists. Most significantly, Augustus Pablo took up the Hohner melodica (a plastic chromatic harmonica with a piano keyboard originally conceived as a child's toy), and the piping, faintly Yiddish melodies which he played atop engineer King Tubby's deconstructions of hit songs elevated a novelty to an accepted color in reggae's palette. This pairing of a musician and the perfect axe, crystallized when Pablo first played his melodica on Wailers sessions produced by Lee Perry, ranks alongside India's Bismillah Khan taking the oboe-like *shenai* from folk traditions into that country's classical realm. Through channels likely and unlikely, be they ambient cds or XTC albums, Pablo's influence continues to ripple outward through contemporary music.

The selections comprising *Classic Rockers* are sporadically interesting through the first half of the disc (a heretofore unreleased collaboration-in-dub between Pablo and Tubby, a solo take on Jackie Mittoo's "Love Won't Come Easy" by the Heptones' Leroy Sibbles) but lean heavily on A and B side pairings of Pablo's own '80s singles to fill out the package. What of the singles from Pablo's Message label? Why not include Pablo's later work at Black Ark Studios? There he recorded vocal prodigy Hugh Mundell, and collaborated with Lee Perry on a project whose avant-garde nature and ultimate disappearance suggests a reggae version of the Beach Boys' aborted *Smile* project; "Vibrate On," a tantalizing fragment of that lost album, surfaced on another Island anthology, long-since-deleted, of Lee Perry's work, *Scratch on the Wire*.

Richard Henderson

THE BEAT VOL. 14 #5, 1995

THE BEAT VOL. 14 #6, 1995

By Norman Weinstein

Reissues of obscure or limited-edition classic reggae recordings are flooding the market lately, and none are as worthy of unqualified praise as *Heart of the Congos* by the **Congos** (Blood and Fire/import, ★★★★★). Cedric Myton and Roydel "Ashanti" Johnson were the singers/songwriters who recorded this towering masterpiece in 1976 along with an impressive roster of studio musicians under the visionary guidance of producer Lee "Scratch" Perry. The result? An absolutely galvanizing mix of spooky falsetto vocals meshing with instrumental rhythms and colors deeply rooted in Rastafarian yard rituals. "Children Crying" and "Fisherman" are instant classics in the same league as the unsettling apocalyptic songs found on Culture's *Two Sevens Clash* (Shanachie). Sporadically available on limited-edition vinyl, this two-disc set includes B-sides of rare Jamaican singles. It is a 92-minute cry of the spiritually seeking Jamaican discovering through reggae a moment of salvation.

On the surface, the late **Peter Tosh** maintained the earthy "rude boy" facade so well that to think of his music in the same breath as the ethereal Congos might seem foolish. Yet *The Toughest* (Heartbeat, ★★★★) includes several of his recordings produced by Perry ("Downpressor," "400 Years") which have a similar mix of spiritual prophecy and political protest. In addition to the Perry productions are those by "Coxsone" Dodd, marked by Tosh's stinging sarcasm about human nature ("Maga Dog") and bawdy humor ("Shame and Scandal"). Having these rare singles from the first stage of Tosh's career makes us conscious of how much of his later career as a solo recording artist involved simply rerecording these early songs, recasting them as thickly (over) produced anthems mainstream rockers could assimilate. Thank Jah we now have the best of his youthful solo efforts on one essential disc.

THE BEAT VOL. 15 #2, 1996

So much has been written about **Lee Perry** by myself and others—many others—that he must have had to wade through it to even get into Ariwa Studios in London to record his latest, ***Experryments at the Grass Roots of Dub*** (RAS). Fortunately, once safely ensconced in Mad Professor's sound laboratory for the unsound, Perry unwinds and delivers up an entertaining invocation of the spirit which includes animal noises, spontaneous poetry and jungle-era dub. The album is the dub companion (really they're just good friends) to the previously reviewed *Black Ark Experryments* but there's still plenty of Perry in the mix.

As might be expected of a disc with titles like "Alien in Out A Space" ("Follow I to the hole in the sky/Where I turn on all the CBS computers") and "Pooping Dub Song," Perry hits the highs and lows of his later-era persona, but manages to be continually amusing if sometimes abusing the listener as any true dada performer would be wont to do. On "Dubbing with the Super Ape" his sudden switch to the rhythm of the slap-back echo near the end adds unexpected dimension which he proceeds to explore/exploit with the joy of William S. Burroughs inhabiting David Byrne's psyche. What Frank Zappa and George Clinton were in their varying ways to rhythm & blues Lee Perry is and has always been to reggae: a one-of-a-kind reworking of the entire concept.

More difficult to deal with in the Perry canon is the recently released ***The Upsetter Meets the Upsettress in Dub Around the World*** (Crystal-U.K.). The Upsettress in this instance is executive producer Kristal Clarwate, and the album is listed as produced by Lee (Upsetter) Perry and Mark (Omar) Perry, his son. If you're looking for the Black Ark Tubby-dominated sound structures that provided the basis for countless mid-'70s hits, pass on this one which more resembles lovers rock dubs of the *Cloak and Dagger* era when family members mined the various fires that passed through Perry's studio and brain. It's hard to imagine a few of these (in particular "Dub It Ina Kuala Lumpa") ever passed the master's muster although "Dub It Ina Trinidad and Tobago" sure has a familiar feel. With that historical preface in mind, this is pleasant Saturday afternoon dub, non-intrusive if at times unadventurous.

REISSUE

LEE 'SCRATCH' PERRY
Voodooism
(Pressure Sounds/CD/LP)

POP QUIZ time. What do Zodiac Mindwarp, Terence Trent D'Arby and Linda McCartney have in common? Give up? Well, given that this is a Lee 'Scratch' Perry review, it's reasonable to assume that the great Upsetter himself has something to do with the answer but, when you can add Bob Marley, The Clash and, erm, Simply Red to that eclectic checklist, the answer takes on a fitting surrealism.

That answer? Production – all of the above luminaries have had their wares sampled, stretched, dubbed up and mixed down by a man whose talents are equal parts madness to pure genius. From the alleged torching of his fabled Black Art Studios to the revelations to *NME* that Island boss, Chris Blackwell, was a chicken blood-glugging "vampire", the apocryphal tales that followed Perry should've been enough to dissuade any potential client (apart from the aforementioned Lord Mindwarp) but hundreds still beat a path to his door, desperate for just a glimpse of that righteous magic.

But it wasn't all big names. Perry's productions in the mid-'70s found their way on to Jamaican pre-release seven-inch singles, more gentle roots affairs than the sci-fi voodoo saved for his own work, and it's a prime selection of these sought-after rarities that have been compiled by Perry aficionado Roger Eagle and the man himself.

Most of the tracks begin lilting, summer affairs, fairground melodies softly propelling James Booms' 'Psalm 20' and The Hombres' 'Africa' along, but when the requisite dub flipside comes along... Alarm bells ring, wolves howl, disembodied voices holler *"juicy machine"* for no reason whatsoever and, as Zap Pow's 'River' slips into psych-dub mayhem, 'Voodooism' is revealed as both a treasure trove of the past and a glimpse of future days. Roots indeed. **(7)**

Mike Goldsmith

New Musical Express 4 May 1996

Voodoo And Other Black Arks

Out in space there are clouds of nebulous matter which scientists are unable to explain. Usually they are written off in the easy, yet obfuscatory, jargon of astrophysics as "asteroid belts" and "particle streams", which is the astrophysical equivalent of describing what you get on the M4 on bank holidays as a contiguous flux of governable alloy. In other words, the scientists are trying to hide something.

My theory is that space is full of lost **Lee Perry** singles from his mid-'70s Black Ark period, rotating in huge, silent clouds about the planet, occasionally crashing through the atmosphere like meteorites to end up in murky retail outlets at £20 a pop. Certainly Pressure Sounds have a major haul of such debris in *Voodooism*, a mastered-from-disc compilation of obscure Black Ark off-cuts and their versions, all of which are a delight, several of which are minor masterpieces. James Booms' Psalms 20 (and dub) is a sensational one-drop from the *Super Ape* sessions. My favourite, though, is the Leo Graham tune which gives the album its title. Scratch-heads will recognise the rhythm but will be thrilled to hear the way Graham exceeds his My Little Sandra with wild ease. The album is a thrill from start to finish.

Another treat, although for different reasons, is *Dub Out West 1 – Roots Cultivatas*, a joint compilation by Armagideon Sounds and Nubian Records of dub cuts from the lush lands South-west of the M4 by Black Roots, Armagideon, Alpha & Omega, Henry & Louis, among other newer names. This is one for the committed dubster but is no less an intriguing document for all that.

Wailers completists will feel obliged to get next to Heartbeat's **Peter Tosh** retrospective, *The Toughest*, which collates assorted early cuts under the jurisdiction of Coxsone and – gadzooks, him again – Scratch Perry.

TOP 10

CHART SUPPLIED BY HONEST JON'S, 276-278 PORTOBELLO RD, LONDON W10. TEL: 0181 969 9822

1 **King Tubby Meets Rockers Uptown** (Clocktower)
2 **Upsetters** *Blackboard Jungle Dub* (Clocktower)
3 **King Tubby's Special, 1973-1976** (Trojan)
4 **Various** *Downbeat The Ruler: Studio 1 Instrumentals* (Heartbeat)
5 **Glen Brown** *Check The Winner* (Shanachie)
6 **Augustus Pablo** *This Is Augustus Pablo* (Heartbeat)
7 **Scientist Rids The World Of The Evil Curse Of The Vampires** (Greensleeves)
8 **Yabby U** *King Tubby's Prophesy Of Dub* (Blood And Fire)
9 **Harry Mudie Meets King Tubby In Dub Conference Vols 1-3** (Moodisc)
10 **Treasure Isle Dub** (Treasure Isle)

THE MONTH IN REGGAE

By Nick Coleman

LEE PERRY
'VOODOOSISM'
(PRESSURE SOUNDS)
LP/CD - OUT NEXT WEEK
The 9th release on the Pressure Sounds label & probably the most eagerly awaited album to date features the legendary Lee Perry. The tracks compiled here stem from what is regarded as his best period, produced at Black Art Studios between '74 and '77, most of which only ever appeared as pre-7" singles and have been unavailable and highly sought after for 20 years. 13 track LP and 20 track full length CD.

In the same series as the previously mentioned Enos McLeod (and a previously reviewed Little Roy) disc, **Lee Perry**, ***Voodooism*** (Pressure Sounds/Ernie B) contains 20 crucial Perry productions—most of them uncommon if not downright obscure. In other words, it's an Upsetter fan's delight, with artists like Errol Walker, Leo Graham and Lee and Jimmy (Riley) as well as Lloyd and Devon, Watty and Tony and dubs for all (10 songs/10 versions). Beres Hammond's early band Zap Pow gets in one of the best (and the Upsetters get in one of the best dubs) with "River Stone," as does Earl Sixteen with "Freedom."

The cd opens with a great cut I've never heard of, James Booms' "Psalms 20," followed by an equally crucial dub version. Lesser-known Perry tracks by Roots, Black Notes and (excluding the Shoemakers this is about as obscure as they come) the Hombres are all featured with wicked dub versions. Considering how screwed up some Perry releases are it's nice to see somebody do it right once in awhile. Hugely recommended.

Lee Perry in the ruins of Black Ark: "I am what I am, and I am he that I am... I am the Upsetter."

Hugh Thomson expected Lee 'Scratch' Perry's return to Jamaica to be bizarre but didn't bargain for the Action Man in a suitcase, the cardboard camera or a toasted history of rock'n'roll

WE ALWAYS KNEW that filming Lee 'Scratch' Perry would throw up surprises. Here, after all, was a man known to be eccentric to the point of mild, if amiable, insanity: a man who used to plant the records he produced in his garden and water them; who wears CDs glued to his baseball cap and mirrors on his trainers so that he can reflect light back over walls to "own them"; who, when we met him, was wearing a child's Mickey Mouse stretch trousers; and who lives in Switzerland.

This last fact is perhaps the most bizarre of all, for quite apart from the intriguing thought of what the Swiss might make of him (or he of them), he has also married a Swiss wife some 30 years younger (Lee is 60 this year), an eminently sensible woman called Mirelle who seems to be in a state of mild shock throughout Lee's first visit back to Kingston for some years.

Filming begins with a swing: when he gets on the crew bus for the first time, Lee whips a cardboard camera out of his plastic bag and starts to film us, singing as he does. The singing does not stop for the entire time we spend with him. It lasts for days. Clearly, Scratch is not a man to sit down and have a quiet chat with us about how he achieved some of the more recherché effects on, say, Cow Thief Skank.

Instead, we take him to the burnt-out husk of his Black Ark studio, which is in the back-garden of his old family house. Although we have introduced ourselves, it is not quite clear if Lee is aware of who we are. When we reach the studio (which Lee has not seen for some years), he wanders around the ruins and we follow, filming in a desultory way. It is clear (and his wife subsequently confirms) that Lee likes to play to a camera. "Who am I? I'm the Mystic Warrior... Because I am what I am, and I am he that I am. I am a technological man, I am not a reggae star, I am a technological star. I am the Upsetter."

He switches on the small Yamaha synthesizer he's brought with him, sets it up on what must have been the old studio console and wanders around lighting small fires with newspapers. This is worrying, as we knew he had

originally burnt down the studio in 1980 out of frustration with what he saw (with some justification) as the iniquities of the Jamaican record business.

The crew and I are in the blackened carcass of the old studio itself, in almost total darkness. This is where he created some of his most extreme sounds in the '70s, punched out of a four-track with a bass that could melt a needle into the red and over-laid with sampled sounds from his TV, the bath, etc. Lee addresses us from the producer's booth, where the roof has long fallen in, so he is appropriately bathed in light as he speaks for hour after hour of his many troubles.

Some coherent patterns begin to emerge: Lee's dislike of being pigeonholed as a reggae producer, for he sees Jamaican reggae as parochial and himself as working best with artists from elsewhere, as evinced by recent excursions with The Beastie Boys; and a deep ambivalence about The Wailers, whom he sees as in some ways having stolen the principles of his early work from him. ("The drum represents the heart beat; the bass is the cut, the lion that flies, walking bass, talking bass come from here (*circles head*), that's the brain; boom, boom, is from here, the heart.") He has a real love for techno, which he sees as deriving from ska, and an affection for the days of the punky reggae party (and for the actual song when he recorded it with Marley), even if he is hazy about details – it's impossible to shake him from his conviction that Johnny Rotten was in The Clash, as illustrated in the lyrics on the right.

Lee carries many of his most important possessions, like a purple-caped Action Man and pressings of his early records, around with him in a leather suitcase. He starts to take them out and line them along the walls of the graffitied wall of the Black Ark to 'reclaim it', along with seven carefully arranged piles of stones. His adult son, who still lives in the house, watches, but Lee won't talk to him at all and his wife consoles the man.

We take Lee to a recording studio. He refuses to use Tuff Gong, although the management are more than happy to let him (as are Sly and Robbie who, like most in Kingston, regard 'Scratch' with fondness, as a wayward alien living on the planet). Instead we go with old session stalwart Hugh Malcolm to a modern studio, where Lee takes impressive control.

When we finish filming, I say goodbye to Lee. He focuses on me, as if for the first time. "Who are you?" he asks. I introduce myself as the director. He is surprised. However, I notice that for the first time he has stopped singing, so I take the opportunity to ask a straight question: Lee, what do you make of Switzerland? He gives a glare. "I hate it."

The Upsetter #2 is another project that has been a long time coming. The follow-up issue to Dave Katz and Henk Targowski's 1989-90 effort, the collaboration began when Dave contacted me last year offering to write for *The Beat*. When I found out it was he who had produced the quirky, hard-to-find *Upsetter #1*, I asked what had happened to issue two, which had been announced for Spring 1990. The main problem, of course, was money, so I suggested that *The Beat* could print and sell the next one for him here. I should have expected anything having to do with Lee Perry would have built-in pitfalls, but could not have anticipated all the complications, most of them computer-related, that continued to obstruct us for the ensuing year and a half. However, thanks to the patience and hard work of all involved, especially Amy in selling ads and setting up distribution, and Donna, straightening out computer files and fractured photos, and the long-suffering guys at Lithoprep, we got it out. Will there be an issue three? Stay tuned to the Upsetter Station for more information.

Jah Guidance,
CC Smith
Minister of Information

And finally...
THE UPSETTER
$5

Just Published: The long-awaited Upsetter #2 is now available.

A very special collector's edition of the legendary magazine devoted exclusively to Jamaica's eccentric madman/genius, Lee Perry. Issue #2, subtitled "The Upsetter Rides Out," focuses on the important years 1969-70, in which Scratch breaks away from Joe Gibbs and establishes his own Upsetter label. It also features a look at his connection with the Wailers, an extensive discography of this period, exclusive photos and another visionary Lee Perry diatribe. Edited by obsessed reggae collectors H.W. Targowski and David Katz, this is certain to be the most Upsetting collector's item of the decade.

Send *check or money order* payable to: *Bongo Productions*
Beat Magazine, P.O. Box 65856, Los Angeles, CA 90065

❑ **The Upsetter #2** $5 per copy, plus $1.25 shipping

THE BEAT VOL. 16 #1, 1997

That Voodoo That You Do So Well

BY CHUCK FOSTER

Lee "Scratch" Perry has gone through a strange and twisted evolution in his career, from sound man, singer, engineer and producer of quirky soul-oriented rock steady instrumentals, through visionary Black Ark cutting-edge underwater barrier crossings to scat-illogical (pun intended) word acid jazz piffle with still-startling bursts of genius inlaid. He's managed to "grow" a worldwide cult following along the way. His latest offering, ***Who Put the Voodoo 'Pon Reggae*** (RAS) combines his vocals with the Mad Professor's productions again and sets him loose on 10 digitally enhanced tracks with varying results.

It's not that the Upsetter is inconsistent—following Emerson, his mind clearly encompasses all. "Go and Come Back" offers the same pussy/cocky inanity of some of his earliest and random mid-period chants and "Don't Touch My Shadow" is as disjointed and weird as you could expect from Jamaica's Frank Zappa. But the Lee Perry presented in these recordings sounds at times like his batteries need recharging—despite the positivity of the opening track ("I Am Happiness") and the head-so-loose-on-the-neck-you're-not-sure-if-it's-William S. Burroughs-or-Dutch Schultz-speaking spirit of "Megaton Bomb." His lyrics are increasingly delivered in the sloughed-off style of a later Dylan, and themes and phrases from previous recordings are scattered through more recent verbal fixations. "Buju, Buju," he intones over and over on various tracks as if some power in the sound itself will carry it through.

As usual with his one-of-a-kind approach when it works, as on "Mokey Party" where he riffs maniacally while Mad Professor grafts John Cage–type sound effects to an updated "Punky Reggae Party," or "Small Morsel" where the diffident, off-hand delivery sounds like he's putting in more than time in front of the mic, Perry shows flashes of his power to amaze and confound with sense and sound. And Mad Professor's masked tracks offer a sumptuous Super Ape-meets-jungle feel not unlike the dream sequences of early surrealist films.

Susan Cadogan made her name as a lovers rock singer and ***Hurt So Good*** (Trojan-U.K./Ernie B) contains the cuts she made it with. "In the Ghetto" (in this case it is the Mac Davis-penned Elvis Presley hit), "Nice and Easy" and of course the U.K. monster smash title track) are only a few (in fact the first few) of the easy-styled selections from this durable sweet singer and the production—from an equally early Lee Perry—will show you why, among other things, Perry's and Mad Professor's musical sensibilities gibe so well: Perry was doing (over 20 years ago) with Cadogan what Mad Pro does so well with this style today.

While we often talk about the influence Perry (who many argue produced their best work) had on the Wailers we seldom note the changes in his work after contact with Peter, Bunny and Bob. ***The Upsetters and Friends 1969-1970: Upsetting the Nation*** and ***Lee "Scratch" Perry and the Upsetters: Scratch the Upsetters Again*** (both Trojan-U.K.) are in the series noted last column of early "Scratch" selections in current cd and vinyl reissue. The latter is a "twofer" with the original lp followed by *Eastwood Rides Again*. The two discs (and three albums) put together show you Perry's productions as they move from increasingly wilder rock steady instrumentals (with occasional "soul" vocals from the likes of Dave Barker and Busty Brown) into a thicker, dubbier—though still plenty wild—sound and also showcase the Upsetters (including the pre-Wailers Barrett brothers) just prior to their work with the influential trio.

DUB SYNDICATE
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
(On-U Sound-U.K. ON-U CD85, 1996)

When one looks at reggae's history vis-a-vis dub, there is a definite fork in the road when it comes to the mid-'80s. As dancehall evolved and the music became more focused on the mechanical creation, the art of dub mastery declined. The nuances and idiosyncrasies of various engineers, like Scientist or Prince Jammy, manipulating live instruments gave way to a reliance on the B-side riddim track and the endless recycling of said riddims ad nauseum. King Tubby's murder at the end of the decade was an ironic metaphor on the state of Jamaican dub (no disrespect intended).

At around the same time, in England, Adrian Sherwood's On-U Sound label was undertaking a counterrevolution. Combining an impenetrable drum-and-bass attack with the amplified buzz of that trademark "dentist drill" guitar and a flood of electronic effects, the On- U "sound" was years ahead of its time. While dyed-in-the-wool orthodox reggae fans reacted with either antipathy or apathy, a whole new generation of listeners was tuned in to the vibrancy of this new dub methodology.

Employing a cadre of Jamaican musical "refugees" like Style Scott, Flabba Holt and Deadly Headly, alongside a host of other stalwarts such as Jah Wobble, Skip McDonald and Dr. Pablo, Dub Syndicate has remained the center of gravity for this wildly disparate musical style. Forging ahead, blithely ignorant or unwilling to compromise their sound for commercial success, Dub Syndicate paved the way for a variety of other dub innovators in the U.K. to create a tradition separate from Jamaican dub.

Recognizing their place at the head of the mutant dub pantheon, Dub Syndicate's new release, *Research and Development*, allows their "offspring" a chance to showcase their talents on a cd of customized Dub Syndicate remixes. Some

DUB SYNDICATE
Continued

of today's young turks like Tribal Drift, Zion Train and Iration Steppers have taken existing Dub Syndicate selections and done some reinventing of their own.

The deconstruction and revamping of these intense tracks provide sheer sensory pleasure for the adventurous listener. Like so much of the modern dub catalog, the prime focus is in repetition for effect, a plethora of electronic gadgetry and an imminently danceable framework to build on. Each remix tends to focus on a nugget of sound or phrasing from the original and highlight that component over and over. Soundclash's take on "Dubaddisababa" focuses on the tablas while peals of electronic current reverberate against the exotic drum sound. Ruts DC give "Can't Take It Easy" a loping cadence as a storm of electronic effects rain down over the melody. Disciples take a run at Lee Perry's "Jungle," where Scratch's boast, "I am the King of Zion" is looped throughout and the mix resembles futuristic dancehall. A kaleidoscope of electronic feedback and discordant radio bleeps embellish the riddim. (Listen close for the famous Black Ark "mooing cow" on this one).

One of the hallmarks of most Dub Syndicate releases is the ringing guitar sound that varies from a high and clear tone to a gritty fuzz attack. This electric presence is what separates Dub Syndicate from more typical reggae recordings. Undeniably modern yet pinned against an archetypal reggae riddim section, on *Research and Development* this unique sound is grist for the remixers' mill. "Mafia" by DJ Scruff repeats the guitar lick in a cyclical fashion that is really the catchphrase for the whole track without being heavy-handed. These chords will stay in your mind for a long time. Coupled with Bim Sherman's vocal and a stuttering drum kick in the middle, it is the most satisfying remix of the cd. Abashanti's "Jamaican Jig" puts the focus on the bone-jarring bass line, which is pushed incredibly high in the mix. A series of bells, keyboard echo, hand drums and strings work to cut across the density.

I have always loved the name Dub Syndicate. It reminds me of a musical La Cosa Nostra with a fluid, yet secretive, cabal of different instrumentalists fusing state-of-the-art technology to the simplicity of the reggae drum and bass. Dub Syndicate is way too noisy for some reggae fans, but if you have a sonic affinity for this sound you will certainly enjoy hearing some of the classic Dub Syndicate cuts like "Hey Ho," with its jungle break and fadeout of "On Wisconsin" or the spongy remix of "Ravi Shankar," remade in these elaborate and ornate slices of cybernetic dancehall. Pick your favorite remix and seek out some of the individual releases by the re-animators. That's the true testament to *Research and Development*.

—Robert Nelson

Lee Perry is another guy who's been meeting a lot of people of late and if you search carefully you'll find nearly a dozen releases featuring, produced by, or misusing his name covered in the course of this column (reissues included—but not including "guest shots" like those on the new Dub Syndicate release). Think of it as "Reggae Update"'s version of "Where's Waldo." Three strictly dub discs (all from Rhino-U.K.) kick off with (let the buyer beware where a title like this is involved) ***Lee Perry the Upsetter Meets Scientist at the Blackheart Studio.***

If the two had time to shake hands in passing it would be hard to tell from this release, which contains some passable Scientist dubs of early '80s origin but lacks the Perry's-head-floating-in-the-constellation intensity of the front cover. The hazing of the name of the famed Black Ark studio from which much of the Upsetters (much better than this) dub emerged was probably our best clue. "Produced by the Now Team" and "Recorded at Striker Lee Studio" are two of the baffling credits. It's possible more than one of the tracks on this disc were mixed by Perry but I doubt it.

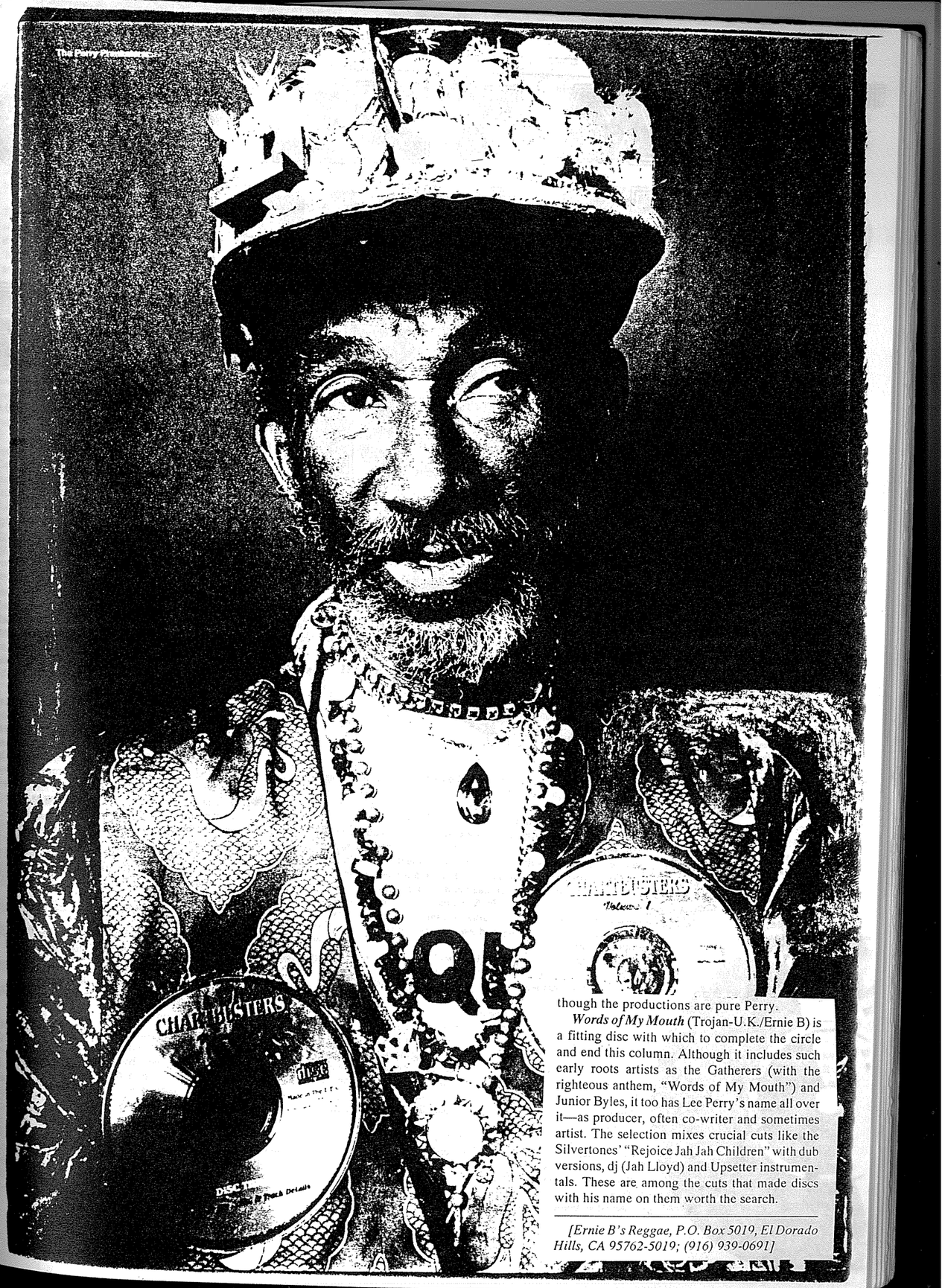
Lee Perry the Upsetter Presenting Dub (Rhino-U.K.) may be no more kosher as Perry releases go than the one above but I like the dub better—the mixes are more experimental and daring and a few are killer. The early cuts would fit just as well on a *King Tubby Eats Scientist at the Dub Restaurant* disc but about four songs in a trio of melodica solos get increasingly twisted—by "Don't Jester Dub" you can answer the question (Where's Perry?) with "in the house" (although I think he's out again by the next cut). The tracks I recognize were not originally produced by Perry. Do you suppose the label has a finite number of Perry tracks and is doling them out one disc at a time to justify using his name as often as possible? I think I'd prefer it if they just numbered them because questions of authenticity aside this is a good dub cd.

Whether irony or unintentional humor ***Bunny Lee and the Aggrovators Aggrovate Lee Perry and the Upsetters*** (Rhino-U.K.) is probably true. How the clash between these two (remember Perry's hilarious song about Bunny Lee's wedding, "Colt the Game" from *Lord God Muzick?*) has managed not to end in a flurry of lawsuits or murder is a testament to irie vibes. The presentation here is straightforward enough: 13 tracks from the Aggrovators produced by Bunny Lee with titles like "Straight to Lee Scratch Perry's Head" followed by an equal number (although the actual number 13 is left off the Perry listing and a Bunny Lee cut substituted) of Upsetters' tracks produced by Scratch dubbed "Straight to Bunny Lee's Head."

The Aggrovators tracks are essential '70s 7" Tubby flip sides (complete with original surface noise!) like Johnny Clarke's "Hey Girl, Don't Bother Me," "Rock With Me Baby" and Linval Thompson's "Don't Cut Off Your Dreadlocks." As for the Perry cuts, nothing is as quite as it seems in the murky world these two inhabit. The second half of the disc contains the Upsetters' *Blackboard Jungle* with all new titles. Plenty of good dub despite the miscredits. *[All available through Ernie B.]*

Another Perry production long unavailable on vinyl and now out on cd is ***Silver Bullets*** by the ***Silvertones*** (Trojan-U.K.). The group had big hits before working with Perry (like "True Confession" on Treasure Isle) and after ("I Want to Be There" and "Burning in My Soul" for Studio One are a couple) but as usual Perry brought out a whole other side of them on cuts like "Rejoice Jah Jah Children" and its follow-up dub. *Silver Bullets* is the Silvertones' only album to date although there's enough material issued on single for one from Coxsone, one from Duke Reid and at least one from 7"s released on various labels ("When Knotty Come" on Clocktower from the '70s and "The Strong Will Survive" on Scorpio from the '80s are two of the best). In the meantime this excellent album, which mixes roots with soul songs and oddities like "Sugar Sugar" and "Souvenir of Mexico," is finally back.

Perhaps you'll think I should have reviewed ***Lee Perry the Upsetter and the Student*** (Rhino-U.K.) with the Perry dub discs it resembles but it's not that simple. It's really an anthology of Perry productions including Upsetter instrumentals and vocals like "Norman the Gambler" by Max Romeo and Linval Thompson's "Kung Fu." The label's tendency to give the songs new names like "Upsetter Sign On," "Upsetter Private Lesson," or "Taste of the Upsetter" make it difficult to tell from the outside if this is dub, rock steady instrumentals or vocals (it's actually some of all three). Maybe it's the same thinking that inspires Perry's "Buju, Buju" chant on his *Who Put the Voodoo 'Pon Reggae*: the repetition of his name alone will sell more cds. I think it works against the label on tracks like "Keep on Skanking," a Bob Marley vocal (you'd think the mention of his name might help sell a few too). This one is listed "on license from Winston 'Niney' Holness" although the productions are pure Perry.



Words of My Mouth (Trojan-U.K./Ernie B) is a fitting disc with which to complete the circle and end this column. Although it includes such early roots artists as the Gatherers (with the righteous anthem, "Words of My Mouth") and Junior Byles, it too has Lee Perry's name all over it—as producer, often co-writer and sometimes artist. The selection mixes crucial cuts like the Silvertones' "Rejoice Jah Jah Children" with dub versions, dj (Jah Lloyd) and Upsetter instrumentals. These are among the cuts that made discs with his name on them worth the search.

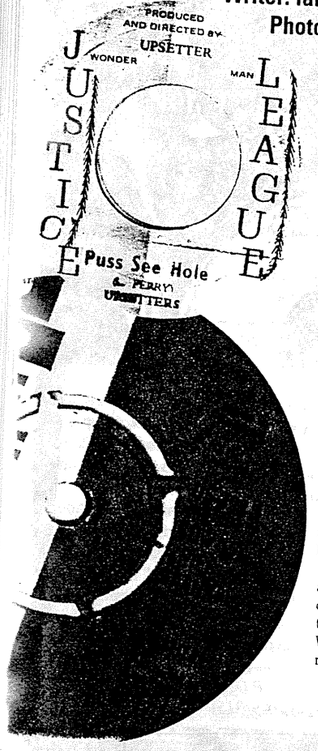
[Ernie B's Reggae, P.O. Box 5019, El Dorado Hills, CA 95762-5019; (916) 939-0691]

"I AM THE DUB ORGANISER AND NOT THE DUB MISER"

Lee Scratch Perry is a real musical legend. The man who invented dub, worked with Studio One's Coxonne Dodd, King Tubby, Bob Marley, The Clash, On-U Sound and created the bedrock of all modern dance music. But by the mid-70s Perry was overworked, hassled by bad boys and strung out on weed he did not know was laced with cocaine. Under pressure, Perry burnt down his Black Ark studio, refused to return to the mixing desk and seemed to go completely bonkers. But, as he sneakily reveals here for the first time, maybe there is method in his madness.

Writer: Ian McCann

Photogrpaher: Alexis Maryon



"I AM the first and last copy, the only perfect copy. If you don't copy me, you don't have anyone else to copy, so why should I be mad at you when you copy me? Copy I. See how much copy you can make of I. Catch me if you can."

Well, he's certainly original. Dressed all in purple, head crowned by a selection of religious images surrounding pink and straw-coloured hair, candles lit three to a glass representing Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, a huge suitcase shrine full of mirrors and pictures and junk spread out to his left, Lee Perry, living legend, is back in London. Furthermore, Lee Perry is back at Mango Records' offices, part of Island Records. This is strange, because Lee Perry is King Of Denouncements and Island has always topped his hit list.

But Lee Perry is pitching to be the next James Bond: never say never again could be his motto. Island are putting out a three-CD set of his old material, Arkology, in April. Are they forgiven, Lee?

"Yes, otherwise I wouldn't be here."

This forgiveness is licensed by pragmatism. Despite his having pushed reggae, and therefore, inadvertantly, dance music, further forward than anyone else, being legendary does not pay the bills. If Island can keep the wolf from the door, so be it.

So even though he has slagged off Island, his old music and all the singers he's worked with, once calling them "Amateurs! In the future I will only work with professionals like Paul McCartney," he's since mellowed his viewpoint.

"I am an artist and I have the right to criticise myself more than anyone else," he explains in his gruff, brittle bark. "If I don't criticise myself, how will I know what the people need? They need these tracks to cure their brains so I agreed to release them again. When they get crazy on the cocaine vibration and need to hear music, they know where to come. So for the sake of peace, I am co-operating with this release. And I need some money!

"I can't block this music from coming out because I know my fans want it. I could say this tape was stolen from me and demand this and that but I would be penalising the people who choose this music."

PLENTY of people have chosen this music. His records haven't been played in Jamaica since the '70s but elsewhere this flake's status has snowballed with each year of inactivity or arguable artistic underachievement. John Peel once described Perry as having "ears from another planet", and it's taken years for this world to tune into his frequency. Unlikely as it may seem, Perry could lay claim to the invention of much of the music we know and love today.

Take hip-hop as an example. Who first put together several different records to create one seamless whole, and then talked over them? Lee Perry, with the still-hilarious 'Cow Thief Skank', released in 1973. It even bit a chunk from The Staple Singers' soul tune 'This Old Town'. But that was nothing new: he had 'borrowed' another soul record for 'Station Underground News', which sampled The Chi-Lites' '(For God's Sake) Give More Power To The People'. The fact that there was no such thing as a sampler in 1972 didn't deter him in the slightest.

The feisty, bearded boffin's restless imagination was central to the innovation of dub, which in turn influenced techno, trip-hop and drum n' bass. His 'Clint Eastwood', cut in 1969, was among the first true dub records and beat Orbital to the ranch by 25 years. (Another movie obsession, Kung Fu, also chopped onto Perry's wax: J Saul Kane doubtless offers him props.)

Later, constructing a phased, multi-layered sound of his mid-70s Black Ark studio, he was producing a precursor of the atmospheric, silken caverns that Goldie and Alex Reece have since made their own. Transglobal Underground would happily nod towards his trance-like 'Congoman'. Perry enjoys his legacy to dance music. "That's wonderful!" he grins. "They imitate the righteous, they're smart."

"If you want to be a good drummer, copy the electric machine then maybe you can see Lee Scratch Perry. Better to use a machine than use a human who is unclean. I'd take a drum machine and beat the drummer until he plays like one."

Drummers must have loved him!

"Then get another one," he shrugs.

RAINFORD Hugh Perry was born in Jamaica around 60 years ago. His mum dubbed him Lee, the first of many nicknames. The next one was Little, self-explanatory when you meet him. In the mid-50s he started hanging around the sound systems of Kingston, settling with Sir Coxsone Downbeat, the set owned by Clement Dodd, who went on to establish the legendary Studio One label. Starting as a gofer, Perry graduated to auditioning acts, writing songs and yelping his own ska records, one of which, 'Chicken Scratch', gave him another lasting moniker.

"After then people call me Scratch," he says. "I didn't like it, I didn't want to be a chicken. But then I found out it could be a lion's scratch." He does a fair impression of the king of the jungle mauling some lesser beast. "From then on, I don't mind the name."

Perry worked with a heap of Dodd's acts, including The Maytals, Delroy Wilson and Bob Marley's Wailers, with whom he recorded 'Pussy Galore' in 1966, among the first 'versioning' records, since it used Marley's 'Rude Boy' as a backing track. It was also fairly rude, another Perry trademark since his 'Dr Dick' hit of 1964.

Perry quit Studio One in 1966 and soon joined Joe Gibbs' Amalgamated Records, for whom, in 1967, he recorded The Upsetter, a rocksteady attack on Dodd. Henceforth, he was also The Upsetter. There followed Upsetter Records and the inevitable blitz on Gibbs with 'People Funny Boy' in 1968; in 1969 he toured Britain in the wake of a Top 10 hit with 'Return Of Django'; that same year he began producing Bob Marley & The Wailers, releasing two classic albums with them.

Fashioning superb roots records for Junior Byles, Leo Graham, U Roy and many more, Perry opened his own studio in 1974. Naming it The Black Ark, he saw it as the route to his and the roots sufferer's musical salvation.

It was one of the cradles of dub music, along with King Tubby's Studio, Randy's, and Channel One. Perry collaborated with Tubby on the astonishing 'Blackboard Jungle Dub', and also produced the single 'Dub Organiser', on which Dillinger claimed "King Tubby a no miser, he is the dub organiser." Perry disagrees.

"I am the mixer and dub creator and dub master. The dub organiser and not the dub miser. I am alive and the miser is not alive. Tubby was the miser because he say he was the dub organiser and I am the real dub organiser. They want to fight against fate and say they create when they did not create."

Perry views the fact that he's still around today, while former allies like Marley, King Tubby and Peter Tosh are not, as indicative of his righteousness.

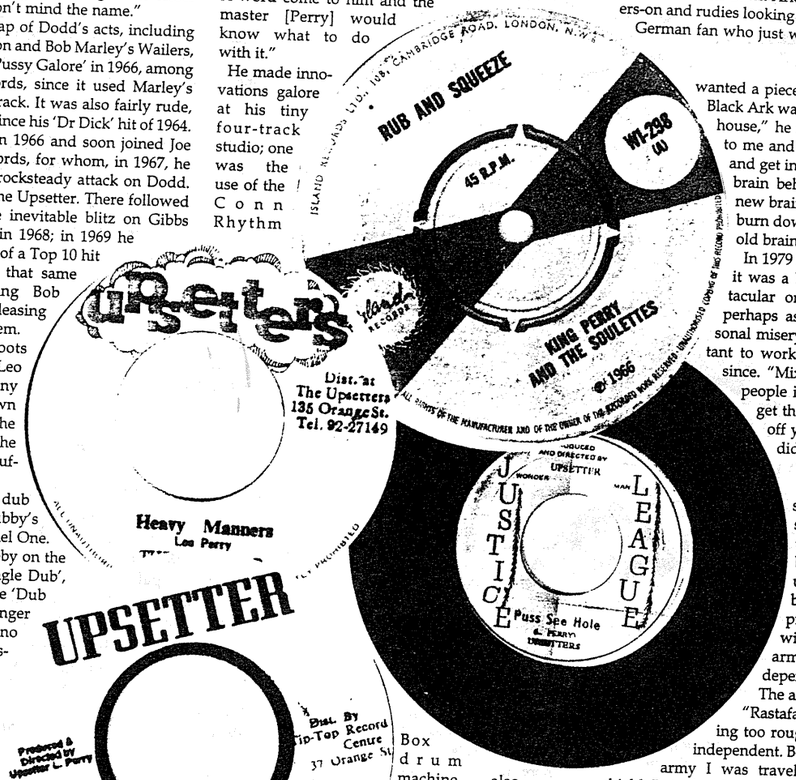
Licensing his albums to Island Records from 1976, Perry unleashed a string of smooth-sounding but still deeply rootsy reggae classics: Max Romeo's 'War In A Babylon', Jah Lion's 'Columbia Colly', his own 'Super Ape', The Heptones' 'Party Time', Junior Murvin's 'Police And Thieves' and George Faith's 'To Be A Lover'. Despite being deeply embittered by the music business, which he feels has not amply rewarded his genius, Perry still has a good word for some of those acts.

Of George Faith, previously known as Earl George, he says: "He had a real sweet voice like a woman. But he had no faith, so I called him George Faith to give him faith."

Junior Murvin wins the accolade: "A great artist who do a great job on 'Police And Thieves'. I liked working with him and I'd like to do it again."

Of famous 70s reggae singer Max Romeo and Bob Marley, he attests: "Me and Maxi was close together, like a medium. When he hear the spirit say a word he would tell it to me and I would put the other part to it. Me and Bob would work like a medium and a master. A word come to him and the master [Perry] would know what to do with it."

He made innovations galore at his tiny four-track studio; one was the use of the Conn Rhythm Box drum machine, also being experimented with by Parliament at the time (Scratch has plenty in common with that other mad inventor, George Clinton).



"The drum machine don't make mistake like the musician," says the little powerhouse. "If you want to be a good drummer, copy the electric machine then maybe you can see Lee Scratch Perry. Better to use a machine than use a human who is unclean. I'd take a drum machine and beat the drummer until he plays like one."

Drummers must have loved him!

"Then get another one," he shrugs.

In the mid-70s Perry would start work at dawn in the Black Ark, and finish late seven days a week, fuelled by rum and ganja – colly weed. "I made a record called 'Columbia Colly' because all this colly was coming out of Columbia. Everyone thought it was real pure because it was so strong. We didn't know Columbia was putting cocaine in it." He spits "cocaine" out like a curse.

Such a lifestyle took its toll. He had rows with Island Records. A projected album with Bob Marley became just a couple of singles. A wonderful LP with The Congoes, 'Heart Of The Congoes', was never released by Island. His own 'Roast Fish, Corn Bread And Collie Weed' also failed to hit their catalogue, which angered him.

Perry watched his dream studio slowly turn into a nightmare. The Black Ark became a magnet for hangers-on and rudies looking for easy dough. There was a German fan who just wouldn't go away. Everyone wanted a piece of Lee Perry: "At first The Black Ark was like a balm yard, a healing house," he recalls. "They would come to me and get their brain healed free, and get inspired. They leave their old brain behind in the Ark and get a new brain. The only thing to do was burn down the Ark and burn up the old brain."

In 1979 Perry torched his studio. If it was a breakdown, it was a spectacular one. He rejected Rastafari, perhaps associating it with his personal misery. He has even been reluctant to work his magic at the console since. "Mixer helps you mix up the people into you. The only way to get them off you is to tear them off you, free yourself. Which I did."

Why?

"To avoid me smelling a stench I did not wish to smell; because of things that was giving me trouble and making my life unhappy and making me bored and causing me problems. Me have to deal with them, because me no army and an army was depending 'pon me."

The army of?

"Rastafari. The army was becoming too rough and me want become independent. Because before I was in the army I was travelling with Jesus as my shield. But when I mix with Rastafari Army I found I had to be the captain all the time. So I leave the army."

It was a scorched earth policy and he has lived by it ever since. Hence the CDs draped on him, the shrine in a suitcase, the video camera he trains on himself in public, his wild shouts, his astounding twists of logic. It gets people off his back: they say he is mad and don't expect anything of him. Take this outburst about his own craziness. There's a point to it.

"That's self defence. I am a very hard man, don't think I'm soft. I only play soft. Inside of me is terrible cruel. I might smile but if I don't smile you would just see a skeleton and you wouldn't be sitting here. I am the first phantom and the last phantom. I am a king and a queen, and emperor and empress. I am all in one. A man and a woman. Where is my pussy? On my head."

Let's have a look at this cerebral sex organ…

"It's invisible. I can't show you my invisible pussy. It must remain a secret. I didn't ask to see your pussy, did I?"

I apologise for my rudeness.

"No hard feelings," he laughs generously. "You have to ask God, 'Dear Lord, please can I have my unseen eye to see the invisible pussy on Lee Scratch Perry's

"This is my shield. This is Excalibur. Definitely. Cheaper than hiring gunman and bodyguards and bad boy. You have to pay them or they're a terrible threat."
Lee Perry on his apparent madness

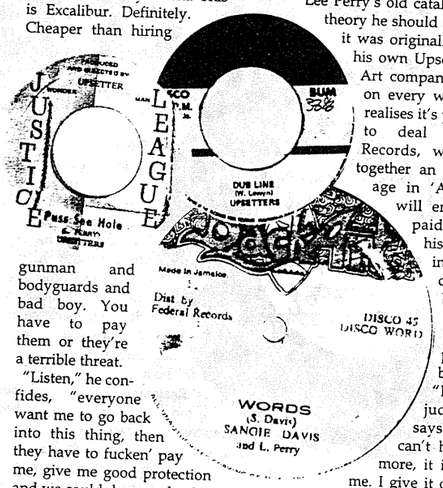
"The rough times is what make me so soft. Because the tougher you get the tougher things get. So I decide I couldn't go on like that. I look at the man in the mirror, as Michael Jackson say, and change my ways."

head?' But the Lord will say, 'No.' Because if you can see the invisible pussy then people will want to fuck your head."

And too many people have already tried to do that?

"I'm telling you. You can say that again. The dreads have tried to fuck my head. I can't allow it."

Hence Perry's protective trinkets and apparently impenetrable madness. "This is my shield. This is Excalibur. Definitely. Cheaper than hiring


JUSTICE LEAGUE
Pussy See Hole & Jerry
DUB LINE (W. Lowe's) UPSETTERS
Made in Jamaica
Dist by Federal Records
DISCO 45 DISCO WORD
WORDS (J. Davis) SANDIE DAVIS and L. Perry

gunman and bodyguards and bad boy. You have to pay them or they're a terrible threat.

"Listen," he confides, "everyone want me to go back into this thing, then they have to fucken' pay me, give me good protection and we could do some business."

AFTER trashing The Black Ark he adopted a nomadic existence, recording in New York, Amsterdam and London. Incredibly, he also returned to Jamaica to rejoin Coxsone 'Downbeat' Dodd after some 25 years. "Coxsone thought if he put his dream with my dream it would make one big dream. But his dreamboat already sail, and he call his dreamboat Downbeat. And me no go 'pon a ship that is going down! Because I man the Upbeat. My ship is going up! It couldn't work."

In 1989 Perry finally fixed abode: in Zurich of all places, where he fell in love with a businesswoman now in her early 30s, Mireille Campbell. They married in a Hare Krishna temple; Perry occasionally breaks into Krisna chanting. Mireille is a great stabiliser, offering Scratch advice and warning him to assert himself. He knows she's right: "The rough times is what make me so soft. Because the tougher you get the tougher things get. So I decide I couldn't go on like that. I look at the man in the mirror, as Michael Jackson say, and change my ways."

Even today there are people willing Scratch to return to Jamaica and 'save' reggae, as if it was drowning. It won't happen.

"If somebody with sense and money says 'Let's rebuild the Black Ark,' and made sure we were not disturbed by undesirables for money, and I wasn't hunted by gunmen and troubled by politicians, I would go to Jamaica and build the Ark, no problem. But not without a certain protection.

"But it's a very hard thing to look back upon your past life and be pulled backward into it. It's not easy for you to say yes. It's like you're being pulled back to be nailed onto a cross."

Lee Perry's old catalogue, which in theory he should control because it was originally recorded for his own Upsetter and Black Art companies, comes out on every which label. He realises it's probably better to deal with Island Records, who have put together an brilliant package in 'Arkology' and will ensure he gets paid, than to eat his heart out trying to untangle decades of business knots. Not to mention the piracy he's been prone to.

"I leave it to judgement," he says serenely, "I can't handle it any more, it is too big for me. I give it over to God's son, let judgement decide. But judgement is still angry.

"If I was to tell you," he growls, becoming the Upsetter again, "how angry judgement is, you would never believe it. But still me come here."

LEE Scratch Perry still gets a certain satisfaction from knowing his old work echoes everywhere from Jimi Somerville (Perry covered The Bee Gees' 'To Love Somebody' reggae-fashion in 1969) to adoring fans The Beastie Boys. People still clamour to touch the hem of his garment. That stands as testament to his greatness: if you don't copy him, you don't have anyone else to copy.

"Am I supposed to be proud of that?" he demands.

That's up to Lee Perry.

"OK, I'm proud of it," he smiles. "Of course I am."

'Arkology' is out in April ■

"If somebody with sense and money says 'Let's rebuild the Black Ark,' and made sure we were not disturbed by undesirables for money, and I wasn't hunted by gunmen and troubled by politicians, I would go to Jamaica and build the Ark, no problem. But not without a certain protection"

REGGAE UPDATE

Lee Perry is mad by reputation, **Mad Professor** by profession. Together these two inmates have been running the asylum, or at least the studio, in fine style through a series of impressive releases that calls the whole question of sanity into question. The Professor acts as enabler for the Upsetter and both alternately build structures and tear them down on Mad Professor and Lee Perry, ***Dub Take the Voodoo Out of Reggae*** (RAS), the dub companion, of course, to their previous RAS encounter ***Who Put the Voodoo 'Pon Reggae***. Few attempt to demystify their own myths but Neil Fraser (the name on the Professor's passport) and Scratch don't give a damn about that.

In fact the dub reveals by removal: As each element is pulled from the mix or toyed with by the mixer the presence of its absence weighs heavily in the mind, even if you haven't heard the original track. The dub functions by stripping bare the structure that supports the songs. By removing the voodoo—the mystery on which reggae, like all art, is grounded—the roots are revealed.

Things are a little different, however, with ***Lee Perry the King of Dub*** (Hit Squad-U.K.). How Bunny Lee's alleged unrumored worldwide terrorist organization is said to have smuggled these tapes disguised as a Jesuit priest's porno collection from a secret hideout in Argentina (used as a backdrop in the movie *Evita*) through Portugal to France, changing hands so many times the original track notations smeared into the names of people who had nothing to do with them would make a great movie—I'm working on the screenplay in my sleep.

Paradoxically, the music on this album is earth-shakingly great reggae dubbed to the max. You will recognize tracks you and know and love under titles like "Water Bed," "Scald Egg" and the ever-popular "Drugs and Poison." You will say don't I have this album somewhere under another name but be embarrassed to dig through all the records it could be to find the one it really is. No hint of vocals—that would make it too easy. In the meantime this soundtrack album will help prepare for the worldwide merchandising rights of the Hit Squad action figures.

by Chuck Foster

THE BEAT VOL. 16 #3, 1997

LEE PERRY THE KING OF DUB

$15.99 (Hit Squad) UK HSCD 003
13 TRACKS: Rebel Rider • Jockey Dub • Drugs & Poison • Toad In The Hole • Fish & Chips • Scald Egg • Juicy Fruit • Boiling Water • Ice Tea • Frozen Snow • Water Bed • Warm Water • Reggae Jungle • Exactly the same dubs as the album "Observer All Stars & King Tubby - Dubbing With The Observer", originally released 1975

from Ernie B.'s Reggae, P.O. Box 5019, El Dorado Hills, CA 95762; or ernieb@calweb.com.

SUPER APE INNA MARITIME HALL

Lee "Scratch" Perry made a triumphant return to the U.S. with two amazing shows in San Francisco on Friday and Saturday, the 4th and 5th of April 1997. On Thursday I received a call from Steve Heilig (local Perry authority) telling me that Scratch was in town, in fact he had spent the day at Disneyland and the shows were going ahead as planned. Up until that point nothing was certain, with the abrupt cancellation of his appearance at the Russian River Festival last year and rumours of visa problems. So when we attended the first show on Friday, we went without any expectations, just glad that Lee Perry would show up, happy for forty-five minutes or an hour in his presence.

The Robotics, Mad Professor's hand-picked Ariwa crew, provided back-up for Perry. The guitarist covered rhythm and lead duties, creating a lot of space in the mix. The bass player was the focal point of the group, controlling the groove. The keyboard player looked as though he could have been an original member of an early 60s ska band. All three contributed beautiful vocal harmonies. The Robotics were awesome, extremely tight, showcasing perfect dub minimalism - deep grooves with melodic flourishes supplied by keyboards and guitar. When they performed a couple of tunes that Perry had previously recorded with Dub Syndicate, they nailed them with all the authority of the mighty Dub Syndicate themselves. The Robotics have got to be one of the best reggae bands in the world!

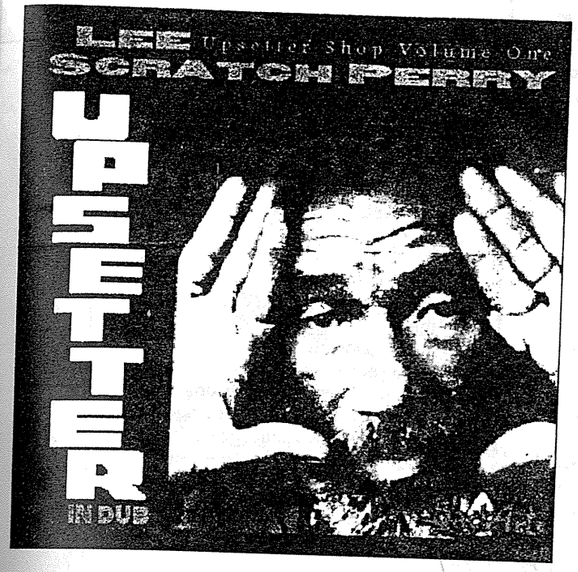
The live sound mix supplied by Mad Professor was outstanding, loud but not distorted, every instrument clear and defined. Combined with the power and intensity of the band, this made for a sonic experience par excellence. The Maritime Hall, with its stage set about five feet above the main floor, provided a clear view of the action. This setting, Perry's enthusiasm, and Mad Professor's superlative sound sculpting, were all the ingredients

necessary for a perfect show.

On Friday night at 10:20, The Robotics opened with an instrumental number, followed by Nolan Irie, who came on and sang three songs. The band then played "Small Axe", which the guitarist pointed out was a song written by Lee Perry with Bob Marley. Lee Perry came on at 11, carrying a large, burning candle and incense, wearing what looked like a multi-coloured hard hat covered with compact discs, with more discs hanging from his jacket. He was full of energy, and obviously happy to be performing. Prowling the stage from side to side, chatting with the audience and asking for a light every once in awhile, Scratch appeared very much at home. He talked for five or ten minutes between songs, at one point, declaring himself President of the United States of Perry-ica and saying San Francisco would, from now on, be renamed Perry Francisco.

Lee Perry gave a phenomenal performance - singing, chanting, and rapping over solid (at times, trance-like) grooves and thanks to the great mix, you could hear every word he uttered. When Perry left the stage at midnight it looked like it might be the end of the show. (Hopefully, he would do an encore). After a five minute break he came back out, sporting a different crown-type hat and carrying a big spliff. To our amazement, he played for another hour, leaving us quite satiated. All in all, Scratch ruled the stage for two and a quarter hours on Friday night.

Perry and the band were definitely all charged up by the event and the ecstatic audience response. At times when Perry talked between songs, sensing the crowd was getting restless for more music, he would pause as though teasing us, then exclaim, "Ok… it's showtime!", before launching into the next number. On Friday night he had some kind of mechanical toy with a voice chip that he activated at one point to introduce a song. The voice sounded like Dracula. During "Roast Fish and Cornbread" he played a toy horn-like instrument. "I love you", he declared at one point and clearly, we loved him back.



LEE "SCRATCH" PERRY
The Upsetter's Shop, V. 1: Upsetters in Dub
Heartbeat HBEA 77

Not only has dub reggae seen an astonishing renaissance in past few years, but the enduring legend of Lee "Scratch" Perry and his cult following has made the move into mainstream music circles. Recently the Beastie Boys' magazine, *Grand Royal*, devoted almost an entire issue to Lee Perry, with a cover story and 20-page article on the man and his influence. Now Heartbeat is proud to release one the heaviest, heartical, happening dub collections ever: *The Upsetter's Shop, V. 1: Upsetters In Dub*. Produced by the genius madman of reggae, this collection not only showcases the musical skills of Sly Dunbar, Aston "Familyman" Barret, and Ernest Ranglin (among others), it also features such vocalists as the Congos, Max Romeo, Junior Byles and more. With over 60 minutes of music — including several previously unreleased tracks — this is the Upsetter at the controls in the prime of his career. If you're looking for the real Lee "Scratch" Perry, you've come to the right place. Step on in to the Upsetter's shop and feel what it's all about!

Includes: "Noah Sugar Pan," "Ketch a Dub," "Version Train," "Rootically Dub," "Son of the Black Ark," "Lorna Skank," "If the Cap Fits," "Dub a Come," "Tedious Dub," "Rejoice in Skank," "Babylon Thief Dub," "Foundation Solid," "Bagman," "Better Reach," "Dub in Time," "Fun and Games," "Sipple Dub," "Bionic Rat Dub"
Producer: Lee "Scratch" Perry
Guest Artists: Aston Barret, the Congos, Junior Byles, Sly Dunbar, Max Romeo
Available on CD. UPC number 0-11661-7577-2
Primary Category: REGGAE
Support: Press, radio and retail campaign targeting reggae. Continued advertising campaign in *The Beat* and *Reggae Report*.
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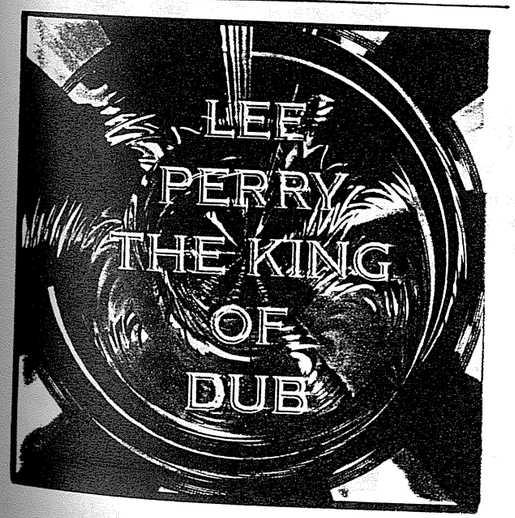


"LEE PERRY THE KING OF DUB"
(Hit Squad, U.K.)
is NOT a Lee Perry album.

Here come The Upsetter

The crazy invention of Lee 'Scratch' Perry rewrote the production note-book. Neil Spencer enjoys a new collection.

Reggae ALBUM OF THE MONTH

Lee Perry
Arkology ISLAND JAMAICA
3-CD, 52-track compilation of the Jamaican genius' most prolific years.

THESE DAYS THE NAME LEE PERRY, AKA SCRATCH THE UPSETTER, gets dropped alongside those of Sun Ra and Miles Davis in a litany to musical individualism and invention. This cornucopia of vintage Upsetter tunes goes a long way to explaining the esteem in which the contrary producer now finds himself held, while showing that Perry was always far more than a nutty professor of dub, a reputation fuelled by Perry himself.

Spanning the years 1975-79, *Arkology* covers the period when Perry had established his Black Ark studio in the back yard of his suburban Kingston home. Here, working with a modest 4-track set-up abetted by a variety of cannibalised gadgetry, Perry became a one-man, roots reggae version of Motown's hit factory. The classics tumbled out in bewildering profusion. Max Romeo's *War Ina Babylon*, The Heptones' Sufferer's Time, Junior Murvin's *Police And Thieves*, The Congos' Congoman, Perry's own *Roast Fish Collie Weed And Cornbread* – these were records that defined and transcended their era, a time of giddy expectation on the JA-UK axis.

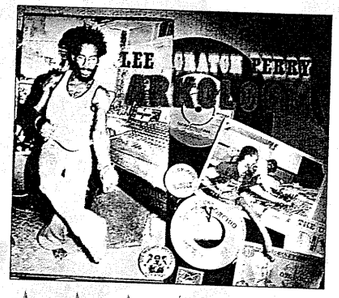
Like Motown or Stax, Upsetter productions had a trademark sound – a phased, pneumatic rhythm dominated by the hissing treble of a hyperactive hi-hat cymbal – and like other great hit stables, the Upsetter sound bled from one production into the next, overshadowing the individuals who stepped aboard his landbound ark. Occasionally, this has led to an undervaluation of Scratch protégés – one thinks of Junior Murvin, a gifted writer as well as very fine singer – but in general The Upsetter deserves his general's laurels.

Paradoxically, given Perry's anarchic persona, the principal feature of the music here is its control. Perry's tools may have been basic, but this is art of precise focus and fierce intent, entwirling surrealist humour (lowing cows, belching frogs), social critique, dancehall romance and religious devotion. Its delights proved too good to last – the Black Ark went up in smoke – but, as *Arkology* testifies, for a while Perry's righteousness covered the earth.

Raiding The Lost Ark

WORK YOUR WAY BACK THROUGH EVERYTHING YOU KNOW about hip-hop, electronica, punk rock and post rock, and somehow, some way, you always end up at Black Ark. It was at Black Ark, a four-track studio in the suburbs of Kingston, Jamaica, where, in the mid- and late 1970s, producer, songwriter and indie-label entrepreneur Lee "Scratch" Perry transfigured reggae's loping cadence and R&B heart into something darker, holier and more dangerous – a music of visionary rhythmic textures and biblical-warrior vengeance. Many of the dub, sampling and remix techniques routinely exploited by the Beastie Boys, Wu-Tang Clan and the Chemical Brothers were forged by Perry on the humble, overstressed Black Ark console. And Perry, now in his 60s, was broadcasting the heavy manners of premillennial, black-exile tension on classic Black Ark productions like Max Romeo's "War In a Babylon" and "Police and Thieves," by Junior Murvin, when Tricky was little bigger than a spliff.

Perry's legend is better known than his music: his associations with Bob Marley and the Clash; the stories of Perry at the mixing board, gunned to the eyeballs on weed, rum and Rastafarian creed; his psychological meltdown, which culminated in 1979 with the torching of Black Ark, apparently by Perry himself. *Arkology*, a 52-song, three-CD survey of Perry's Black Ark output, helps to redress the imbalance. The set does not include Perry's great '60s ska sides, his early instrumentals or his crucial turn-of-the-'70s work with Marley and the original Wailers. But *Arkology*'s sequencing of vital Black Ark titles like "War In a Babylon," "Police and Thieves" and the Heptones' sunbathed-gospel beauty "Sufferer's Time" with their respective dub versions captures Perry at his most wily, disguising tripped-out socio-religious tracts as irresistible dance music.



★ ★ ★ ★

Arkology
LEE "SCRATCH" PERRY
Island Jamaica/Chronicles

In Errol Walker's "In These Times," a rewrite of the Gershwin standard "Summertime," Perry places Walker's lamentations about unemployment and oppressive inflation over a gutted rhythm track in which guitars and keyboards are yanked out from under the singer without warning. At times, Walker seems physically suspended over big, echoey holes of economic disaster and acute personal despair. Perry's gift for whiplash drama and word-sound punning is also evident in the rude cymbal crashes that explode like land mines in "No Peace," by the Meditations. And the extreme compression that Perry applies to the brass in the extended mix of Junior Murvin and Dillinger's "Roots Train" makes the horns sound like a steam whistle on the Jah Railways express.

At Black Ark, Perry definitely operated on the crumbling margins of sanity; his own "Soul Fire" is anguished, hallucinatory dub, the sound of a man driven to terror and incoherence. But for the most part, Perry was crazy like George Clinton, drawing dynamic performances from a fluid cast of singers and sidemen and camouflaging his calls for social change and spiritual retribution in cool licks and cartoonish mysticism. A steely, stabbing guitar adds a Steve Cropper-like touch to Max Romeo's Rasta-superhero hyperbole in "Chase the Devil" ("I'm gonna put on an iron shirt/And chase the devil out of earth"). In "Roast Fish and Corn Bread," Perry's slow, woozy chanting transforms the notion of a simple Rasta lunch into something akin to a sacrament.

The sacred aura and rhythmic might of these recordings make it easy to forget that Perry was trying to cut hits. He made records to be played on booming sound systems at Trenchtown dance parties. That he also made great art, though, was hardly accidental. "This is dub revolution/Music to rock the nation," Perry declares at the beginning of *Arkology*. Black Ark went up in smoke almost 20 years ago, but the revolution set in motion there is still in progress. —DAVID FRICKE

POP CDS IN BRIEF

Upsetters in Dub

★★★ LEE "SCRATCH" PERRY, Arkology, Island Jamaica Chronicles, $39.98

Perry, a reggae producer whose innovative "wall of feedback" compares favorably to Phil Spector's "wall of sound," pioneered tape looping, sampling, remixing and other techniques that are de rigueur for today's ravers and rappers. In the mid-'70s, "Scratch" became a studio legend with albums like Max Romeo's "War Inna Babylon" and Junior Murvin's international smash single "Police and Thieves."

Unfortunately, more than half the tracks on this three-disc tribute are dubs – and two or three remixes of the same track are a bit hard to take, unless you're a hard-core dub fanatic. This much filler ultimately dilutes the impact of Perry's genius

—j. poet

"Dub" as filler ?

STEFAN DE BATSELIER

THE KING OF DUB

LEE 'SCRATCH' PERRY
Arkology
(Island/CD only)

'FIRESTARTER'? DON'T make us laugh. Keith Flint may be the man on the Glastonbury minibus' idea of an unhinged pop nutter, but Lee 'Scratch' Perry would eat his punk panto antics for breakfast and skin up with his finely ground bones straight after. No need for facial piercings and picture-postcard hairdos when you've got a stare that'd put the squits up the Kray twins, a penchant for arson and suffer under the misguided apprehension that you are, in fact, the son of God.

No wonder, then, that Perry's reputation as an unstable torcher of buildings and single-handed leveller of Jamaica's surplus funny fag mountain tends to overshadow his pedigree as a prince among knob-twiddlers. Who wants to talk obscure B-sides and long-lost archive material when you've got decades of *bona fide* loony behaviour to sift through instead?

Well, the compilers of 'Arkology' do. This triple CD box set – that'll be a mind-boggling 52-track selection, then – boasts more collectables than the Queen Mum's jewellery box and is probably the most salacious musical wet dream ever to land in the sweaty palms of serious dub enthusiasts everywhere.

But, more importantly for those of us who don't intimately know our Congos from our Junior Dreads, this undeniably exhaustive collection is resolutely free of the unsettling madness that continues to infect Perry's records right up to the present day. If you're after the man in full primal yelping, dubbed-to-the-max headf— action, in other words, you'd be far better off looking elsewhere.

YOU'VE BEEN

Thankfully, what 'Arkology' lacks in freakshow value it more than makes up for in subtle but sparkling tuneage. Mining the period in the late '70s when Perry was both highly productive and, apparently, feeling remarkably sane, it bulges with Perry's own unassailable efforts as well as the prime production makeovers he performed on his numerous Jamaican counterparts. Obviously the benefit of 20 years' hindsight helps, but hardly a natty dread foot is put wrong from start (Perry's own 'Dub Revolution Pt1', with percussion by his kitchen sink) to The Upsetters' jubilant finish 'Corn Fish Dub'.

The frills here are submerged deep in the mix – a steadily roasting hi-hat here, a ludicrously stoned bassline there – but they're so expertly executed they slip away almost unnoticed most of the time, refusing to distract us from immaculately penned songs like Mikey Dread's 'Dread At The Mantrols', Junior Murvin's 'Bad Weed' and countless others here.

And a good dub song can often be the purest musical hit of all, as primal as the gnarliest 1920s blues, more drenched in emotion than a recently chucked Otis Redding and as tense as the most claustrophobic darkcore jungle. All rolled into one, natch.

No bunch of arson, then, and much, much more than an obscurist B-side orgy for those in the know. 'Ark at that. (8)

Ben Willmott

LEE PERRY

If you were to ask me who was the best producer I've ever worked with, I'd say Lee Perry. I did a whole album with Lee at his Black Ark studio in Jamaica, a wonderful experience. It never got released. Lee Perry is all about music; this thing about him being nuts is just him seeing what he can get away with. He's eccentric, certainly, and if he can get away with it, he will. A lot of the time he just does it to distract himself, because he'd rather be elsewhere. But he's fine, he was my ally when I was working there, because I had a lot of problems with both political and religious blacks in Jamaica. They descended on me and tried to give me a real hard time, but Lee was like, "No touch him, man, he's cool". He just invents himself, and he does some daft stuff, but he's not vindictive or anything. I never understood how he got so much bass on to a record. We worked on a TEAC four-track – he'd clean the heads with his T-shirt!

ROBERT PALMER
IN MOJO SEPT.1994

FLAMED!

Twisted irie starter: dub genius Lee 'Scratch' Perry

BEWARE GENETIC MUTATIONS OF THE SUPER APE

RETURN TO THE ARK

by Crispin Taylor

Ninety-seven fire boom! Having spent most of my formative years studying a thing called Jamaican reggae music-Augustus Pablo, Yabby U, Glen Brown, Coxsone Dodd-I must confess that an interview with one Scratch Hugh Rainford Lee Peter Pan Perry aka The Upsetter, was a pretty special event for me.

Lee's contribution to Jamaican music is immeasurable. From the early years with Coxsone Dodd, through his own productions with Bob, Peter and Bunny (The Wailers), to his golden period at the ARK, Scratch has always been the spark, the fire behind the music.

Taking nothing away from the creative brilliance of his early years, it is for his time at the ARK that he is best remembered. As he says himself, "That is why I am here now." Island have put together a retrospective compilation from that period called "ARKOLOGY", featuring, if not the mightiest of cuts, certainly more than enough examples of music that displayed the classic UPSETTER sound. Standouts include the tremendous "Norman" by Max Romeo; the mystic "Congoman" by the Congos; "Ketch Vampire" by Devon Irons; and the magnificent "Vibrate On" by Augustus Pablo.

Perry built BLACK ARK studios in 1973/4, and from that time until its demise put out, not only works of creative technical genius, but some of the deepest, most mystical fire roots music ever to grace a turntable. BLACK ARK was much more than just a studio. It became the centre and focus of a tribe, a posse of artists with more than just a musical vision. This was spirit power.

Those were the last days of innocence in Jamaica. Throughout the Seventies the socialist People's Nationalist Party-led by Michael Manley, a visionary politician who embraced reggae music and Rasta, and courted Fidel Castro-fought against international pressures to yield to Western economic interests, striving to maintain a degree of independence for this little island in the Carribean sea. The people were filled with a sense of purpose, a mission, but the COLD WAR was in full swing and America didn't check for a SMALL AXE in its backyard-at least, one that it didn't control. Guns mysteriously started to flood the island, laying the roots of the appalling violence now distressingly commonplace in Jamaica.

It is against this backdrop that Perry worked. Lee is Old Jamaica. (Proper, upstanding Jamaica.) When he refused to work with Bad Manners unless they changed their name to Good Manners, that's a serious joke. I get the impression that those BLACK ARK days were filled with not only righteous fervour but also with hope.

The depth of that faith amongst the BLACK ARK family is self-evident: its power undeniable. The ARK produced music that tapped into the deep-

est realms of the human spirit; its longing, its desire. Today, Scratch refers to it as the Ark of the Covenant, and I for one wouldn't disagree. Nothing is as powerful as belief and with archangel Perry at the helm he was the catalyst that turned that belief into something mysterious, haunting and beautiful.

When Jamaica started to implode in the late Seventies, just as he was blowing up internationally, the conflicts became too much to bear. Gunmen and bad boy mashed up the vibe and eventually, I guess, he had had enough. He burnt down Black Ark in 1979 and left Jamaica shortly afterwards. His brilliance then has not been equalled since.

He comes across as eternally childlike, endlessly playful,-firing off salvos of free word association, landing on an idea, exploring that for a moment then off again. I asked him to sign my copy of the album, 'Scratch and Company – Chapter One', a mighty classic from that time which has on its sleeve a photo collage in the shape of Africa featuring pictures of, among others, Brad Osbourne (Lee's one time protege who was shot in New York), Lloyd "Bullwackies" Barnes, Johnny Clarke, Augustus Pablo, Horace Andy and Jacob Miller. He held it at arms length, taking in the image. "I love you all!" he declared.

For me, his greatest triumph now is to have survived it all. To see one's friends and brothers fall away through violence or illness, to see one's life's work disrespected by the next generation, one's country self-destruct. To see that time of fertile genius and promise go up in flames and to come away positive, no bitterness (I certainly couldn't detect any); loving life still and creating still is a remarkable achievement. Lee Hugh Rainford Perry is a warm, gentle old man.

Yoruba tradition says that the whole purpose of your life is to work towards achieving "Iwa-pele", which broadly translates as, "gentle character". In these times of profiling O.G.'s (Orginal Gangstas), bad boy uncommitted living and general cynicism and disenchantment, we would do well to learn from this gentle character who lends wings to the soul

photos: Jean Bernard Sohiez

and urges us to fly.

Crazy he is not. Neither sentimental. Playful yes. Mischievous definitely. Creatively bugged absolutely! All of his more outlandish statements were accompanied by a smile and twinkling eyes. May we all age as gracefully and extravagantly as this humourous, gentle soul. Ladies and gentlemen, I give you, the Upsetter...

I'm kind of focusing on spirit because you seem to me to be a very spiritual man and a lot of your works have always carried spirit.
Well I believe in the spirits speak, because, I have my headband here to prove it (puts on toy "injun" feathers) , the Indian tell you about the spirits speak and the voice that speak, y'nuh? I am a great fan of the Indian you know, they have onion tan too,heh,heh. This is the spirit that speak, up in the cloud, on the Chase Manhattan Bank, in Manhattan, N.Y.C. and said, no pity pon you New York City said my kitty, heh, heh, heh. Lee Scratch Perry will prove that he is the return, and the living incarnation of President Abraham Lincoln, who is on the high chair of the U.S.A. that no other President cannot sit in. Not even Pres Clinton. Not even George Clinton. Emperor Selassie I remain stand. Ske ham fer'ash
!

Huh?
Ske ham fer'ash.

What's that?
A secret weapon that too many people's afraid of it so it's better not to disclose the name cos I think you will go home afraid of it.

You said somewhere that you're the dub sheperd.
Of course.

Of course!
I am.

Do you think there is spirit energy in technology? You said once that the Echoplex had the spirit of King Arthur.
Everything is perfect. You are perfectly right.

When you use a mixing board does that carry spirit? Does this dat machine have spirit?
Everything. King Arthur point me out and pick me to replace him. Is the same King Arthur all the time because Merlin know is ongle I can be the real King Arthur. So him choose London all the time, him choose England every time, fe send the knight of the round table to manifest that I am King Arthur.

The English poet William Blake felt that Britain was a spiritual place. He wrote Jerusalem, "and did those feet in ancient times walk on England's green and pleasant land" *about Glastonbury, where Jesus is supposed to have been brought by his uncle, Joseph of Aramathea, to study.*
Hare Krishna is here to represent Jesus Christ the biggest hero in all the books, in all the Bible, the true and living one, who art the open door, that no one can close. I'm gonna say something to make this interview short and nice, about this story. I am here to manifest that I am all in one and three in one and all combined and Jesus Christ is my cock. So who think Jesus Christ white, he is white, who think Jesus Christ black, he is black, cos Jesus Christ is also black and white. The first time Jesus Christ bake he was too black, he threw it back over him shoulder and drop back in Africa then come the black man. Next time Jesus Christ bake he was too white, him throw it in a Europe then come the white man. Then he decide to bake again cos Jesus Christ want to be a gold man. Ya look into my eye you see me change from a old man to a gold man. Jesus Christ is on my cock. So if you think Jesus Christ is white, no problem. And if you think Jesus Christ is black, no hard feeling, I am sure Jesus Christ is on my cock.

(laughing) What do you think of drums. Cos I play percussion and I get that feeling, you know, from that skin on skin, that energy.
When you're playing drum you're touching the heart and the brain. That what move the people. That what move the spirit in the people. Cah the people cannot move until you touch their spirit, and you wake their spirit and the spirit wake their body. So you have to keep them up there in the air, cos is the air that dance them. They dancing on the air to the beat. So you have to touch their hearts, touch their brain, so their soul tickle everywhere, and they fly. Then they say "Oh last night we had a wonderful night!", they didn't know they were flying on the air.

You did quite a lot of percussion yourself on those old things.
It was an experiment we did wage in the Ark man, so when me doing me session me jus run me cassette, nobody no know who play them or where they running from. All I do was experiment, which is manifesting now. I must know which part of it I want to pick up back, I want the part that lead into the people what I want to go into. The part that want the people who carry drugs, and the killers, I don't want to spoil their fun, be somebody to cut off their fun. When they have their fun then it will the end. Make it endy. While they are endy I descendy, into heaven and my father's, to sit with my invisible father, who also leave Ethiopia Addis Ababa, out of a mud hut, in a haste, before they kill the spirit.

Did Skully Sims play a lot of drum on your things?
Not much, cos he was cripple, and now him blind. If he did he wouldn't cripple or blind. Anyone work on my spaceship nothing can't go wrong with them. My spaceship is life's spaceship. My spaceship heal the sick, raise dead. Make rain come sunshine. My spaceship no carry blind, or sickness, nor death, nor cancer, nor AIDS.

Of those old guys you worked with who were your favourite players of instruments?
Ernest Ranglin had a thing going, I really take in his portion of the gift he put into a ting they call reggae to build it up. The energy was thinking bout a guitarist to make music look international, me a go think about the best guitarist, and me was seeing him as a jazz guitarist. Me could call it jazz reggae, me no have to call it reggae punky party, it could be anything. Cos is part of the music me was using, pop, jazz, rap, every fuckin ting. Blues, everything, rhythm and blues, and mix it up to build a country. It wasn't to build a politician dem or coke-ist dem. They fight against ganja with coke, to support gun and politician call game. So I leave and let them know what them gwine do with it. Right? Who take sick in Jamaica did have to take sick. Who get blind in Jamaica did have to get blind and who get dead in Jamaica did have to get dead. Because the Ark of the Covenant was the brain. The Ark of the Covenant wouldn't take their strain anymore and their roughness and their toughness and their dreadness, and their badness and their gunmen, who come by night, ask who are you, 'Get up bwoy who are you'. When prisoner love tief artist so, 'Where is all them tape deh all them ting?'. Rude boy dress like soldiers. And them want no mercy, no more mercy. Blood? No.

So were there a lot of bad boy hanging around Black Ark in those times?
Everything, every sort. Dead, natty deads. Natty dread name them natty dead. Dead who wanted to become life and dread which want to be dreader dread, so them become dreader dread and all dead. And all the rougher rough all be too rough now. And then want to be tougher tough and then become tougher tough and get too tough. Next thing a man go hear is puff (laughs). Puff is a big explosion. Is not a threat you know, what you hear me a tell, from that, "who are you" and this interview and the Island CD request. Island. I said that Chris Blackwell was a black vampire and him get vex, and want to punish me and want to penalize me and want to do all the ting. But I wouldn't turn down his request because I know is not his request, it's the request of the people who are suffering, want brain surgery, they need music. So because of the people who are suffering, I won't be causing them brain damage because of a little stupid ▼

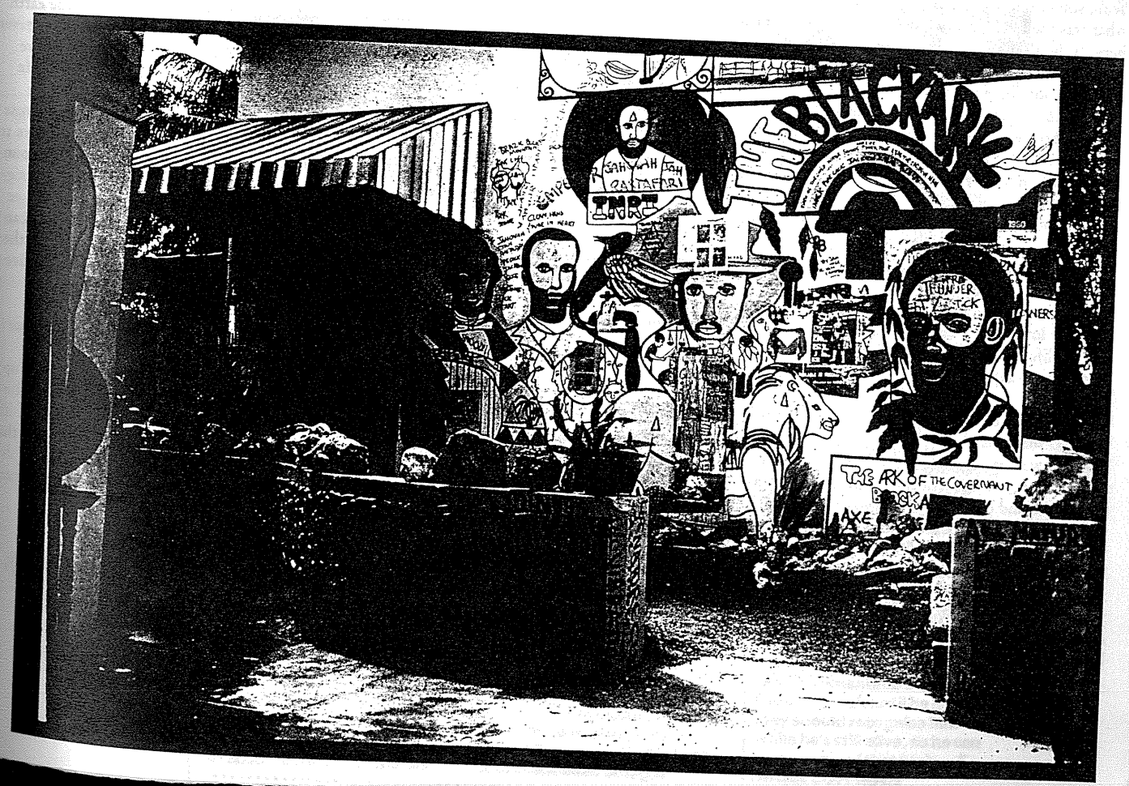
◄ argument. Because I am the master vampire that's why I know Chris Blackwell is a vampire. Cos I am the vampire who bite IMF, CBS, EMI, and bite all record company. Bite the council of churches. Bite Queen Elizabeth and bite the Duke of Edinburgh and bite the Bank of England. So I know I am a master vampire so I pick Chris Blackwell to be my second vampire. Where I bite the money he bite the music! (positively roars with laughter). So out come the Lee Scratch Perry box-set. And Lee Scratch Perry secret laboratory that have all the facts of life. I am no millionaire, is no billionaire or zillionaire speaking. There is no other millionaire after I, 'cept in the sky. And all the big power chief that sit in the sky, the Ethiopian fireman, the African shaman, and the African lawman. The lawman, the shaman, the phantom, from skull cave.

Did you ever check out the African things in Jamaica, like Kumina, or Pocomania or Buru drumming?
Them a try now. Edward Seaga (leader of the right-wing Jamaica Labour Party and principal opponent of Manley who came to power around 1980) have the mind of Obeah. Them planning to Obeah all the tourists and tek way them money (laughs). When they go to Jamaica them money disappear ZAP! They don't know what happen to their money, because when they exchange it for Jamaica Obeah money, is money you can't spend in no other bank. Jamaican money is illegal totally. You cannot spend in no other country. When you take Jamaica money to a bank they say what is that? No I never heard of it. They don't want to see it. It totally illegal. So fe dem guns dem take the police and soldier and the government to get the ganja, chase the little man out of the ganja business. When they see a little man work on a plant them take possession and tek it way, say dem burn it down.Lie! Dem tek it way go sell. A fe dem market dat, right? Dem have one or two ting coming to dem bombaclaat.

Let's hope so.
Hope so? God can't wrong. God is perfect, God don't make mistake.

So did you ever take part in any Kumina or Buru drumming?
I don't want no part of Obeah! If they provoke me I will call upon Ske ham fer'ash to move the Kumina business. I don't want no part of it, that's why I leave Jamaica and live in Switzerland in the mountain, to save my ears from Pocomania. They started reggae. And low volume reggae. And low volume singers. And low volume music and low volume current and low volume currency, low volume dollars. And low volume government and low volume gunmen and low volume politicians. Low volume cocainists and low volume brain. Because I am high volume Hugh Rainford Perry. Why should I stick with low volume brain. My high volume brain don't love that, neither my high volume name. Neither my high volume God, my high volume aim and my high volume destiny.

Tell me about Africa. Have you ever spent any time in Africa?
The only time I spend in Africa it was too hard for me so I was shipped back to Zion. Then come again in Jamaica as super bwoy but it was too rough for me again so I burn the Ark with ball of fire in my hand. So I would say Africa is forward in this time, as a phantom, in skull cave. I present the bird laws, the ancient bird laws from Africa, and the ancient sea-bed laws and the jungle laws.



Have you heard any jungle, d+b music, the new music the youth are making here now?
People to make jungle music now, you will have your contact with the jungle not going out there saying them going to make jungle music because of the name. What we have is real jungle connection for the jungle does send out messages, then it will extend into something good. If you're going to make stupid jungle music it won't reach anywhere. So if the people want to make music like jungle make positive contact with the trees and plants and flowers and roses, the birds and the bees (sings) *"hawks that fly and the bees, and the flowers and the trees, them hum up above, about a thing called love"*. So you create love for your heart, and love will fly through your thought, drive like an angel through the heavens in the sky and form a star. Love can do anything, there's nothing impossible what love can't do. Love walks through the keyholes, open the door and say "Behold I am love, I live for evermore". Africa Ethiopia Addis Ababa. Ethiopia stretch forth the hand to God and Ethiopia stretch forth fire in I hand, and if you don't know I by now you will never know I again (sings to the tune of 'If You Don't Know Me By Now'), *"If you don't know I by now, you will never never know fire again. Who burn down the Black Ark studio, and run away to Switzerland with the money, and all the energy in my hand.."* (laughter). OK. We serious joke and serious perfection of reality. Back to normal.

Back when you did Super Ape, and you wrote the track 'Zion Blood', **"Zion blood is flowing thru I veins, so I and I shall never work in vain, African blood is flowing through I veins, so I and I shall never fade away".** *That was a pretty revolutionary thing to be saying in Jamaica at the time.*

That's why Chris Blackwell listen and hear, 'Oh, he have Zion blood in him veins and I want some of Zion blood'. That's why I am here now. Cos if he wasn't a vampire he wouldn't be chasing Zion blood. And to save those people who sick in the brain I give him a little of zion blood, no problem. Send the fire and also send the rain, the rain to cool the brain, to save us from strain, and take us on the mystic train, that we will be in time to catch the morning plane (sings) *"rise up now and take your seat, Hallelujah"* .

That tune, 'Travelling'...
Yeah, something was going on. We had a plane going. And we had a train what was the best train. We still have it. It no gone anywhere. Is right here. It didn't disappear. It was an experiment, to test who can take success and what they will do with it and where they will take it to. What you send out come back to you. Look what this creation has done to you. He didn't have no covenant. Neither do you trust your evil government. Who are the government working for? Who is the government boss? Get behind thee there governments! You no longer control the people of London England Great Britain. You are governed by Lee Scratch Perry music. L.S.P. So I say go backward Margaret Thatcher, go back in your coffin with your seven years of famine, while I hold my seven years of jammin' with my people that love my Jamaican music. So come again like Punky Reggae Party, let bygones be bygones, and say to all those who are gay be gay still, all those who are batty man be batty man still, and those who are haters be haters still, and those who are lovers be lovers still. Choose your way of life and love what you love and love the life you live, for it's yours. Let's go! This is me Lee Peter Pan Perry talking as a jungle man.

What do you feel about the other producers of that time, people like Yabby U for example?
Yabby U was trying to do something that him hear from the spiritual world which was OK. All the producers who was listening from the spiritual world and creating words what them hear through them ears from the spiritual world, they will have a chance, they will be saved, in what world them think them believe in. For what you believe in save you. What save I is I because I believe in I. And because I believe in I man music that I create is I. Is my twin brother. So I am happy to know that you people love my twin brother that much. It bring me back from the dead world to join my twin brother in the limelight, so me and my twin brother can be happy in the limelight.

How about Augustus Pablo?
He was trying but somebody obeah him, cah him suffering, him have a bad foot, it smell funny or something I think. Is maybe something he has done or maybe somebody obeah him. Maybe he step on something, I don't know. If his guardian angel was strong enough it would push him away that him no walk over that ting. I always call upon my guardian angel to make sure I don't walk down into a pit. But otherwise he is praying to Jah Rastafari and him believe in Rastafari. Maybe Rastafari can save the foot, cos the music that he was making he believe in Rastafari.

He turned the melodica into a beautiful sound...
Yeah, he was putting out some good air as well, that is what I am saying. Those were signs of faith, that he put out on the air. So I hope Rastafari can help his foot, for his portion that he put into Jamaica reggae music (laughs). Is not a laugh, is from the heart.

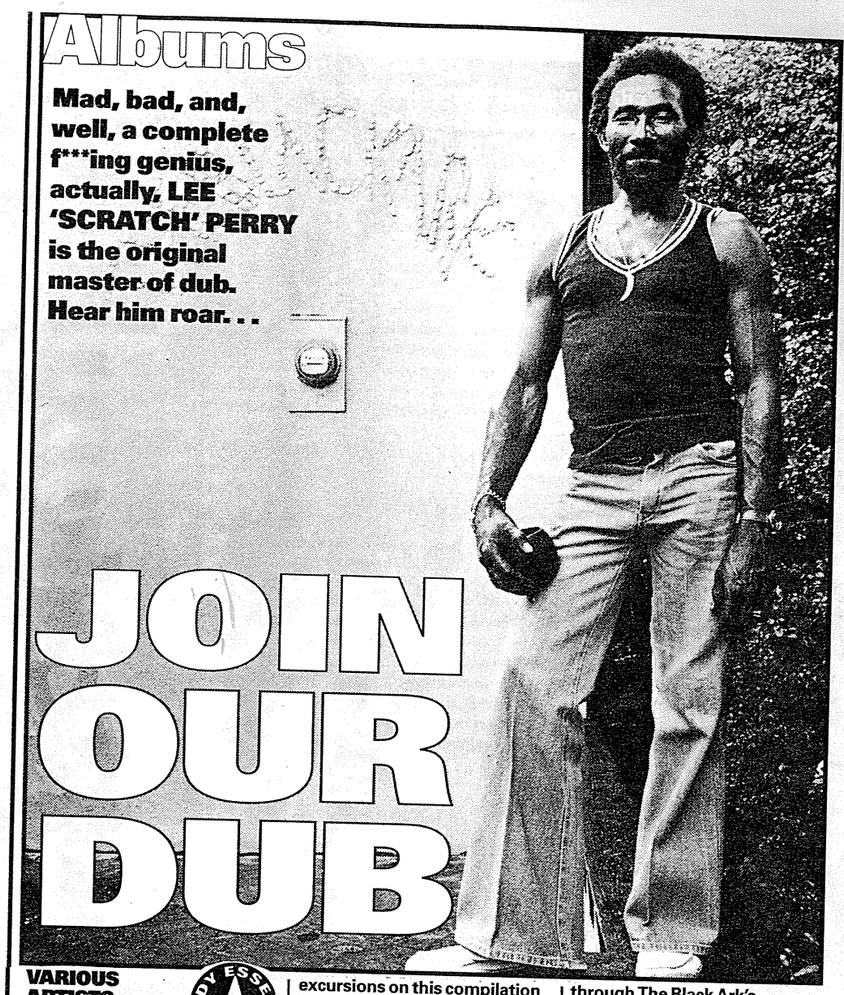
What do you think of the music coming out of Jamaica now?
Original sound is good still in Jamaica, but because I don't want to hear it I run away to Switzerland, and marry a knife, which is my wife and my interpreter. I run away to save my ears, which is my temple. Jesus tell you about his temple, the holy temple, well this is my temple (touches head), my holy temple what I want to protect from what I hearing come from Jamaica. So I run away to Switzerland and marry a lady which is my wife but I call her my knife, my dagger, and this is my cloak (points to coat). Music from Jamaica I'm not listening to it. I'm not criticizing it but I cannot take it at the moment.

How's life in Switzerland, you like it up in the mountains?
It better than hearing the reggae for sure, and it better than seeing gunmen for sure, and it better than seeing politician for sure and rude boys and rude girls knocking at my door and knocking at my fence, disturbing my mind and my creation. Is better to be there, with the torturous knife, which is my wife. Is better for my health.

Have you ever checked out snowboarding or skiing or any of those winter sports?
Speaking about snow. Me tell you the little I know about snow because that part of snow is recording in I brain as a programmme – Ice and snow. The kids and the children who love that part of the world so much, that is to say the igloo, is a part of the heavens, is higher than the earth. The part of the mountain that is higher than the earth is closer to heaven. So I am seeing how the people act on the part of heaven that they are blessed with. Cos the way people act in Jamaica is not my style of life anymore. What they are doing there is ok for them. Me no want my brain to be pulled down into something too heavy and too hot, because then my brain cannot fly. Me like to see children slide on ice. Me love to see the vision of the ice. Me love to see the ice making art on the mountain. Every streak of ice means something to me. Me reading all the signals, and the signs that it making. Me don't see that in Jamaica. Me see guns. Or young bwoy who can do something fe me. Some gun guy can come and do something for you. Me take some torturing, but from the torturing me get an education to make a positive choice pon a negative ice.

I want to close with something light. If you could be a bird or a fish or any kind of animal, what would you be?
I am a bird right now, and a fish in one. A birdfish in a tree. (stands up) These two limbs they are my roots. When I stretch my arms I am a bird, and these are my two feet, they are tree leaf walking with the tree of life. I am also a flying fish. All I have to do is identify I-self and I am he that I am, who scorch with lightening and burn with ball of fire. I am he that I am. (sings) *"I am he who cannot die, I rebuild the sky, I am he who cannot die, and I refuse to cry..."* ■

STRAIGHT NO CHASER


Albums
Mad, bad, and, well, a complete f***ing genius, actually, LEE 'SCRATCH' PERRY is the original master of dub. Hear him roar...
JOIN OUR DUB

VARIOUS ARTISTS
ARKOLOGY
Island
(3 CDs/52 tks/240 mins)
ESSENTIAL BUY

"IT was only four tracks written on the machine, but I was picking up 20 from the extraterrestrial squad. I am the dub shepherd," says Lee Chicken Scratch Pipecock Jaxxon C Stero Fletcher Perry. The Upsetter.

Misunderstood by reggae purists, exploited by punk rock careerists and pursued by demons. Ears from another planet. Fingers of divine intervention. The organiser. The destabiliser. The sound creator. From scratch. Hah! Third member of The Holy Trinity of innovation in sound sculpture – Sam Philips, Phil Spector and Lee Perry. Sounds that defy description, resist imitation and sound today as impossibly gorgeous, as inexplicably wonderful as they did when Lee Perry invented them. Lee Perry – whisper his name.

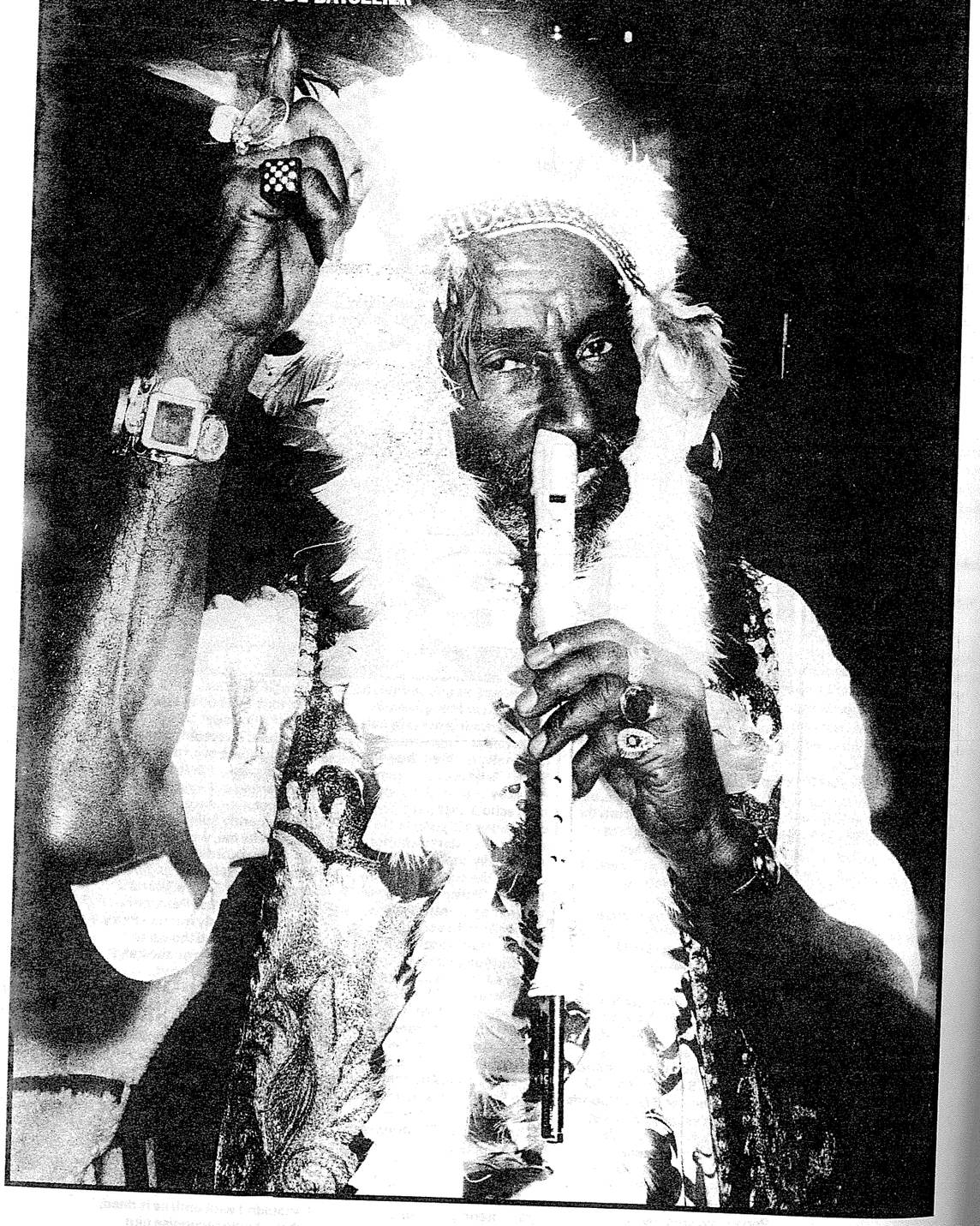
For, more than anything, the gift of The Upsetter was the gift of silence, the capturing of space. On many of the dub excursions on this compilation you can hear him gradually deconstructing the original in exercises of pure musical minimalism. Often they work like an aural puzzle, where your memory of a vocal inserts its own echo into the song and completes the picture. He'll deliberately start a chorus and cruelly snatch it away or, as in the superb Jah Lion toast of "Police And Thieves", where he parenthesises Junior Murvin's classic exclamatory vocal, he'll remind you of it after it's gone.

There are countless such epiphanies on "Arkology". Every facet of Perry's jewelled '75-'79 output is represented: the political animal looking to lick Babylon with a brick (The Meditations' no-compromise "No Peace"); the righteous man looking for meaning (The Congoes' "Congoman"); the seductive soul loverman looking for forgiveness (George Faith's gorgeous "To Be A Lover"). All shimmering like stars, soaked in that bubbling submarine euphoria, the sound Perry heard in his head and channelled straight through The Black Ark's little four-track on to tape.

That "Arkology" translates this sound intact onto compact disc is just one of its many achievements. For those of you starting out – you lucky, lucky people – the pointers are eminently followable. For people like me, who count their Upsetter records in dozens, there are unreleased gems and new versions galore. Island's relations with Lee Perry have been notoriously fragile – Perry has still not lifted the curse he brought down on the head of Chris Blackwell – but, as apologies go, this is as unequivocal as they come. The packaging is superb. Steve Barrow's annotations are concise and comprehensive. They may slip lightly over Island's part in the story of the deconstruction of The Ark – the unreleased "Return Of Super Ape" isn't mentioned – but this is not the time to quibble. This is the time to celebrate.

As Dr Alimantado says: "They shouldn't wait until he is dead, they should recognise him while he's still alive, so he can enjoy some of that high..."
MARK LUFFMAN

● Meet LEE 'SCRATCH' PERRY, reggae legend and one of the greatest producers ever. Be warned, however, for the ways of genius are not always clear to us mere mortals. Or, put simply, Mr Perry can sometimes seem as mad as a fish. TED KESSLER journeys into the heart of the wibble.
Crackpot shots: STEFAN DE BATSELIER



Guess what? Lee 'Scratch' Perry is the King Of Creation! No, it's true! He says so! He also says he's an alien from outer space, a visitor from another world here to collect the good brains so he can make more babies with good brains. He knows the colour of the wind too. The colour of wind is royal red Merlin.

What else? Well, it certainly isn't looking good for the future. Mother Nature is due a spring clean and she has it pencilled in for the millennium. She's going to flip the world upside down and shake, causing a huge whirlwind that will rip the world apart. Many people will die, their bodies burnt because even their spirits are dirty. If, however, you have a clean spirit you may escape the burning. Depends, really.

Luckily, today we have not come to an outpost of Island Records in west London to peer too deeply into the future (although we will anyway) but to rejoice in one man's mighty past. Lee Perry is meeting the local press today because Island are releasing a box set called 'Arkology' that's culled from the magical work he performed for them in his studio, the Black Ark, between '74 and '78.

The story goes that the site of the Black Ark was chosen by Perry because one night in 1972 he awoke beneath a tree in Kingston, Jamaica, and heard music coming from the tree. This was the source of music, the budding engineer realised, and he decided to build a studio there. If, from this split-level shack, and equipped only with a four-track studio, Lee Perry hadn't produced much of the most other-worldly, frazzled and inspired music of the decade then you could dismiss the musical tree story. But listen to the mind-bending, melody-mashing work he did there with Augustus Pablo, Junior Murvin, The Congos or his own Upsetters. The man had tapped into music's main artery of invention!

As with all visionaries, however, there were nonbelievers, and in 1978 Island refused to release his (excellent) 'Roast Fish, Collie Weed And Corn Bread' album, fell into dispute with him over his work with The Congos and promptly dropped him. Soon his missus left him, taking their kids too, and Perry went on a mad drink and drugs binge, eventually burning the Black Ark down before legging it to Europe. Nowadays he lives in Switzerland.

He never fully recaptured the brilliance of his Black Ark years, but his legend endures. Paul McCartney turned up on his doorstep begging to work with him, a host of punk bands revered him – The Clash spent a month hanging out at his studio – and the Beastie Boys thought enough of him to devote a whole issue of their *Grand Royal* magazine to him. Hell, he even twiddled knobs for Robert Palmer. He is the sorcerer of sound, the emperor of dub, the greatest producer since Phil Spector. Want to meet him?

THE LITTLE old man filming himself ("Why? Because I believe in myself!") in the middle of the room is wearing a headdress of multicoloured feathers, a lilac waistcoat with Chartbusters CDs stuck to it ("I must keep the hits close to me") and jewellery made from old coins and dice. He has a briefcase open on the floor and inside it he has fairy lights, beakers of water and candles. As we enter the room he whips off his headdress, puts on his crown of mirrors and serenades us with a toot on his recorder. Ladies and gentlemen, Mister Lee 'Scratch' Perry.

"Edelweiss, edelweiss," he sings, patting a seat next to him, *"sing it twice 'cos I'm an alien from another world! You live in my suitcase!"*

He stops, blows his recorder hard and reiterates this claim with menace.

"You live in my suitcase!"

His Swiss wife (jet-black hair, winkle-pickers, looks like a bassist in The Cramps) drops her newspaper and barks, "Interview! Interview!" at Perry. Perry straightens the ruffles in his waistcoat and composes himself.

"I'm ready for your interview, I'm ready for your interview to make my one wish come true! Yes *(blows recorder)*. I'm from another world, I'm from the other world!"

Really?

"I'm the spirit that speaks. I am the spirit that speaks because before I was the flesh I was the spirit that speaks. I am from the beginning. I am from *Genesis*. I was the revelation and then I became last and then I become first again. You step through the door over here and then you step forward march. Whoever came at the back came in first. Alright?"

Right.

"One love. When I am the president I will remember your face."

So why do they call you Scratch, Scratch?

"Because I am the lion cat. I will always be Scratch. Aaaaaarchhh! You can't stop Scratch as long as the sun does shine, because the harder you try to stop Scratch, the harder he does scratch. He's the lion and the tiger in one. And he has a tree in his heart named Ganja – Rastafari! That's where he keeps his Rastafari, not in his locks. There's a cyclone in my headtop. Are you aware of the cyclone? It's a whirlwind."

And you've got one in your head?

"Yes, you can tell all the people that I've told you the colour of the wind and the colour of the wind is royal red Merlin. It's there in my hair, look!" He picks apart his multicoloured dreads. "And that colour there is gold for the sun, and that colour is the blood, the blood in the brain. If I could make the crazy uncrazy, then what am I doing here? I'd be Ali Baba cool."

What's your earliest memory?

"Righteousness. A man's consciousness is his righteousness. It absolves a whole nation of people, so with righteousness all things are possible and without it no things are possible. That's my first teaching. There are two paths, you pick your choice: one is the alive, one is the dead. The dead is destruction, young people get dead and they don't know that they are dead."

Are you afraid of death?

(Hugely indignant) "WHY SHOULD I?!"

Many are.

"I don't know any dead people. If I did I would get rid of them with my small axe, for sure. That's how I deal with evil, with a small axe."

Mmmm. What do you eat?

"I don't eat meat any more because I want to be what I'm supposed to be. I stopped eating meat and stopped drinking alcohol and look at my face." Perry stands up and preens in front of a mirror.

"I'm not looking old any more. I try to smoke ganja because that's good for your tone. I look beautiful now, no?"

VERY BEAUTIFUL, yes. But we seem to have been blown off course. What of the rich music he's invented? What of his legacy to music?

"I am responsible for the unknown world, the baby world. Sometimes I make babies' music, sometimes I have the devils blowing through the door chased by my music. Whether it was reggae, shreggae or raggamuffin it's still lapped up by people who love it. But I'm going to do something else that I wish to do, not what I have to do. I'm not here for money, but because of a miscalculation of the money. So I'm here to con Island Records into giving me the money to make a Number One record. I'm going to take away their money and take away their power and rebuild the world *(blows recorder). Hello mother! (Sings to wife) You're looking so tired! The food make you drowsy and the humour very flowsy…"*

Missus: "Interview!"

Perry: "Let me tell the people of England that the government of this country now realise how dangerous ganja is. If they let you smoke ganja then they wouldn't have any more economy."

Why?

"Because they have their secret pact with Jamaica government, they have syndicated the sale of ganja. If the ganja was legalised in Jamaica or here then the price would drop and become too cheap and then they'd have too much competition in their market. Everyone knows that the Jamaican government gets money from ganja. So they make a mistake and say they're going to keep the ganja market nice and make more money by selling the cocaine too. But now that they've introduced the cocaine to the sellers of ganja in Jamaica they're having trouble because the cocaine is the death. Ganja is life and death as well. If you know how to use ganja it is life, if you don't it's very dangerous. I say to the English government, the Swiss German government, the Swiss government: you are stupid. If you don't recognise ganja in your country you are going to have trouble from LSP. Lee 'Scratch' Perry. Pounds, Shilling and Pence."

Don't you miss home now that you live in Switzerland? Don't you miss Jamaica?

"No, Jamaica has to miss me. I demand my rights. There are people over there who are suffering. Mentally. Because they can't hear my music. And they need that comfort and I couldn't give them that comfort so I made a pact with Island Records to put out this album. Give 'em a little blood. It is my blood. They need it. The patient needs another injection before the patient dies, so I'm going to give a little blood

Scratching the Surface

Lee Perry Is as Crazy as You Want To Think

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

When is a "crazy black man" a crazy black man? From Monk to Marvin to Dr. Octagon, the myth of black lunacy has been publicly inseparable from the reality of black genius. Monk knew how to fake a straitjacket, and it wasn't because people on Saturn wear leopardskin that Sun Ra did—lunacy is a pill that nonblack America sometimes needs to ease the pain of admitting that almost all of the formal innovations in popular music have been made by black musicians. Lee "Scratch" Perry has created his own realm of stealth weirdness, simultaneously writing and unwriting the history of reggae, often on ras bumba claat's dime. Perry's life is its own rich remix.

Roast Fish Collie Weed & Corn Bread for example, one of the few records credited solely to Perry as artist and probably my fave, pits house band rhythms against Perry's pixie-dust percussion and mixing-desk abuse, over which Scratch narrates like a homeless Martha Stewart on how to stay healthy, how many lights are broken on his block, etc. His mic skills on any of his records are easily protorap, his dub stylings (like Jah Lion playing dominoes louder than Max Romeo's singing on "Norman") are closer to John Cage than King Tubby, and his uncredited cover versions of tunes like "Tell Me Something Good" and "Fever" made him a lawless proto-Puffy. And it was all recorded at Black Ark with only a four-track 1/4-inch Teac reel-to-reel, 16-track Soundcraft board, Mutron phaser, and Roland Space Echo. Bouncing tracks together to create 16-track thickness, albeit with considerable signal degradation and tape hiss, Perry bubbled more than pavement in July and was guided by voices that could actually sing.

Perry doesn't compile easy because, like every Jamaican artist since 1964, he made umpteen records, most of them seven-inches produced for the voracious, day-to-day music consumer. He's made coherent albums when it mattered to him or when Island pressured him—*Roast Fish* and *Super Ape* are examples. But he's done much of his work on the fly, and the lion's share of that work has been for him to license and others to sequence and package.

In the intense assembly line of Jamaican music making from 1966 to 1978, with tireless house bands, recycled backing tracks, and revolving engineers and singers, roles are not easily defined. Long before the sampler started eating up an existing recorded catalogue, Jamaican recording practices—five or 10 prereleases for every commercial release—cannibalized authorship before it was established. The weekly flood of 45s on Upsetters, Trojan, Black Art, Wild Flower, Orchid, Scandal, et al. doesn't make an easy historical trail.

Arkology attempts to document the breadth of the work done at Black Ark between 1975 and 1979. Things start grandly with "Dub Revolution Part 1," an Upsetters dub complete with drum machine, Perry's mouth noises, and some well-meaning "na na na" vocals that all conspire to sound benevolent, cracked, and cosmically complete. You can even hear mixing desk buttons click on and off as Perry mutes and unmutes the rhythm rack toward the end. After that, compilers Trevor Wyatt, Steve Barrow, and David Katz opt to make *Arkology* into *Island-ology*, fleshing out Island's out-of-print *Scratch on the Wire* collection with alternate takes and dubs. What you get is rich, canonical, and juicy but a bit misrepresentative. You just can't compile five mixes of "Miss You," five mixes of "Undercover of the Night," and call it *Stonesology*.

Arkology follows the artistically respectful if tedious practice of following each vocal version with its dub or instrumental counterpart, culminating in a numbing six versions of the "Police and Thieves" rhythm. This is instructive for anyone who doesn't understand that rhythms in reggae music are used many different times by many different artists.

I bet, though, that such a fact stated in the liner notes plus one or two examples on CD would have driven the point home.

There are two other recent Scratch releases. *Upsetter in Dub* (Heartbeat) compiles B-sides from Perry's Black Ark era and before (at Randy's Studio 17), the latter comparatively light on extreme dub moves, tending to skank rather than splatter. The highlights are the Black Uhuru–ish vocal dub of "Son of the Black Ark," which threatens to burn down Babylon (but in a nice way), and the churchly, vertiginous "Rejoice in Skank," blessed with the overheated hovercraft stink that distinguishes good dub from boring instrumentals.

Technomajikal (ROIR) shows the Perry who, since 1980, has become the Orson Welles of dub, pimping out his catalytic presence and dope vocals to voiceover a variety of backing tracks created by admirers. Dieter Meier, once of Yello, provides, like, techno dub, in alliance with X-Perry-Mental (Lukas Bernays and Jean-not Steck), while Perry lays over compudelic toasts in what sounds like a good hour in a Zurich studio on someone else's tab.

So who's crazy here? Is Perry a lucky oddball who happened to hook up with the Wailers, happened to find the Maytals, happened to choose the Congos, the Meditations, and Junior Murvin to sing his crazy ideas, happened to encourage Tubby's experiments? The moral of our story: Worship bananas but don't front on the skills. V

LEE "SCRATCH" PERRY
ARKOLOGY
(Island Jamaica/Chronicles)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Lee "Scratch" Perry was the craziest of the original Jamaican dub pioneers. In the '90s, his legend looms larger than ever. *Arkology* offers an amazing three-disc summary of his glory years from 1974, when he built his own Black Ark studio, to 1980, when he burned the place down. As the Noah of this Black Ark, Perry produced some of reggae's top artists, along with his own band, the Upsetters. In classic tracks, Scratch builds nervously playful rhythms and

heavenly melodies into political protests that float like the Spinners and punch like Public Enemy. On the killer tracks from his legendary 1976 *Roast Fish, Collie Weed and Corn Bread,* you can hear Scratch listening to the sound system in his head and translating it onto tape, like a dread William Blake.

Arkology is an essential dub document, but the real treat is hearing how Perry's vision infects so many different strains of '90s music; he transmitted the shock waves that still echo across the pop junkyard.

Rob Sheffield Details August 1997
Spin August 1997

VILLAGE VOICE August 19, 1997

CONTINUED....

and if the valves are going kaput they will heal from my music. My music can heal you. And kill you. This *(picks up three-quarter length sheepskin coat)* is my cloak by the way. You like?"

It's just a coat, though.

"No, it's a mystical, magical cloak!"

No, it's just a sheepskin coat.

"No, but a sheep was in it before. This is where a sheep lived. Baaaaaaa!"

Who or what is your greatest enemy?

"My greatest enemy? I wish I had one! I just wish them all away. I just wish their thoughts away. I say, 'Thoughts, you have no more part of me! Goodbye!'"

When are you going to make a new record?

"When? Whenever the time comes for me to do that it will have to be something commercial. Lee Perry top of the hit parade, Number One in the charts, advertised on video, on television, people get crazy about it: 'Oh, this could not be better and wow!' Until I reach that stage I would rather feed Island my blood. I want people to realise that I am the King Of Creation. And I will not return to anything unless it is going to save somebody, but I do not need to return to anything to save myself. I must go forward creating music. I need new thoughts and if I don't have new thoughts I get mad and if I get mad everyone gets sad. Some die."

What are your thoughts on the millennium?

"Big earthquake. A mighty earthquake."

Missus: "Ooohhaaaa! For a thousand years! Oooohaaa hooouha!"

Perry: *(Blows recorder)* "Whirlwind like nothing, whirlwind. Waaachhhh!!! The trees will blow away, the rockstones will roll into islands and the whirlwind will blow them away. The world will be blown apart and blown away and the bodies of the people burnt. It's coming."

Is there any chance that that may not happen?

"Ya know bingo?"

Bingo?

"You shake the barrel and pick up a card. The winning card will be there. It depends on where you want to go. If you want to go with the Lord... I always look towards that Jesus Christ exists. Whirlwind and everything. Massive attack. If you think about it as an earth train, it's a dub train. And everybody on the dub train will be safe. Everyone else will be ashes and dust. I and I the captain of the train. Is that clear?"

Missus: "I want to say something about burning now."

Perry: "Mmmm..."

Missus: "The bodies must be burnt because most of the people are polluted here. The planet Earth is going to have a clean out. If the spirit is clean you shall not burn the body."

Perry: "We are just visitors here. You have to repent for your sins and quick. They're coming back and they're going to kill you."

And on that bombshell, Lee leans over and offers *NME* a Swiss chocolate. He extends his hand. There is nothing more to be said. The interview is over.

"You have a good message?" he asks, wiggling in front of his video camera. "You feel happy about it?"

Well, I'm a little worried about Armageddon.

"These things can change. It could happen in 2011, if nothing happens. *(Starts singing) You earn your money, yeah, you earn your money! And no, it ain't funny, just earn your money...*"

Any regrets?

"That I'm so rich. It's an accident."

How's your physical health?

"Absolutely superb."

How do you achieve it?

"The maximum in health. The maximum in fitness. The maximum in quickness. The maximum in smartness."

Nice to meet you, Mr Perry.

"Bye, bye."

New Musical Express 26 July 1997

9 LEE "SCRATCH" PERRY
Arkology
Island

Seventies reggae can be all things to all people. To hippies, it's ganja, mystic babble, and unfortunate haberdashery. To punks, it's rough-neck posturing and renegade politics. To R&B smoothies, it's lilting lovers rock. And to post-rockers, it's cut-and-paste dubs and low-fi techno-robics. With the release of *Arkology*—a three-CD collection of Lee Perry's late-'70s productions from his Black Ark Studios—each camp has reason to, respectively: a) play Hacky Sack; b) sneer and skank; c) put some Riunite on ice (so nice); and d) remix another Tortoise track. No matter where you stand, Perry's certain to launch your notions of songs and production (not to mention sanity) into outer space.

A mad, and madcap, minister of dread, Lee Perry has no use for "songs" as pop fans know them, with authors, owners, beginnings, middles, and ends. His medium is one of total flux—rhythms mate promiscuously with Bible-thumping rants and exquisite group harmonies. Thus, we get five variations on Junior Murvin's classic "Police and Thieves," including a dub instrumental, a sax-led instrumental, a DJ toast, and a completely different vocal performance. But don't mistake repetition for monotony. Behind his mixing board, Perry deftly stumbles through sonic orbit, plumbing the mysteries of the hypnotic grooves his crack musicians (some of Jamaica's finest) lay down.

Perry also chews up American pop and soul chestnuts and spits them into his roiling bitches' brew. "In These Times" transforms Gershwin's "Summertime" into a lament of Jamaica's crushing poverty, where "the livin' ain't easy" and "my daddy's not rich" (but, of course, "my mama's good-looking"). Meanwhile, "Closer Together" confirms Junior Murvin as Jamaica's Curtis Mayfield when it segues into a "cover" of the Impressions' "Gypsy Woman."

Arkology also reveals Perry's alchemical use of ramshackle studio technology. Most cuts swim in a haze of sacred reverb froth, displaying a jarring, third-world "musique concrete," with sound effects ranging from leonine roars to acid house-style bleeps and buzzes. While *Arkology* doesn't capture Perry's dub-freakout side like Trojan's excellent *Open the Gate,* "Dub Revolution Part 1" and "Vibrate On" show just how radical he was. While Phil Spectors of the First World were content with studio trickery as ornamentation draped around Beatlesque pop objects, Perry, whose studio probably lacked indoor plumbing, thoroughly embedded the sound of recording technology into his musical products. A master curator of sounds found, imagined, and pulsing eternal, Perry united medium and message in a funky, fearless vision. **ROB MICHAELS**

REGGAE UPDATE

Let us now enter into the realm of dub, where no two discs—even by the same artists—sound alike and the entire universe begins to distort, where space and time intertwine and sound itself is subsumed by deeply resonant subaudible forces. Of course I'm talking about the latest from **Lee "Scratch" Perry**, *Upsetter in Dub* (AKA *Upsetter Shop Vol. One*, from Heartbeat). Fans of dub and Perry will be paradoxically pleased to know it's not really new. but classic work gathered for the first time on cd.

One of the secret treats of reggae has always been the 7" single, and the other reason—besides the absolutely untransferable sound of the things—has always been the dubs. I don't care how many dub albums you have—Neil Cooper claims to have 10,000—you haven't captured dub because most dub has only been released on B-side 7"s. On this disc Chris Wilson gathers 13 scarce Perry dubs from the flipsides of (often equally scarce) singles and adds three previously unreleased tracks and two previously unreleased alternate mixes, putting this disc right up there with the original *Super Ape* set in quality and—we're talking about Perry—supreme weirdness.

Although barely audible above the intricate series of buzzing fans I've had to set up to get through this Southern California summer, the voices of Junior Murvin, Brent Dowe, the Congos, Perry himself and others cut in and out of these thick, bottom-heavy, bass-laden versions. Previously unreleased "Bionic Rat Dub?" Previously unreleased "Son of the Black Ark"...

So what's this *Lee Perry: Dub-Net Philosophy* (Trans/Cult Fotofon), I asked music purveyor Ernie B when I spied it on his 10-stone mail order list. "I'll let you be the judge of that" was his typically laconic and droll reply as he envisioned sales plummeting in the wake of my forthcoming castigating review. It says produced by Omar Perry and, um, Pauline Morrison here. As in first wife who allegedly was responsible for some-er-bootleg or bogus Perry albums some years ago? Removed surreptitiously when she fled to England in his Black Ark flipout days? Or perhaps more kindly some kind of divorce settlement like Marvin Gaye's *Here, My Dear*?

This is of course one of the great (or perhaps not so great, depending on your point of view) myths of reggae, like the one about Bunny Lee going into King Tubby's studio after he died on the pretext of getting some of his own tapes and leaving with every King Tubby master tape that's been issued out of France or Portugal in the last 10 years. Are these stories true? If they were would parties responsible admit it? I don't know. I wasn't there.

What I can tell you is, strictly speaking, this isn't a dub album. These are backing tracks that were either never voiced or voiced on tapes these tracks were bounced to. Some are inarguable Perry tracks, though not in the form of an "authorized" release. Still, they are interesting and probably a must for those jonesed on all things Perry. Even they should be aware that "Lady P" and Perry's son Omar are credited with "digital overdubs." For anyone else, or those who are just looking for crucial work (like the Heartbeat release reviewed above), this is one to handle with care.

by Chuck Foster

live and direct

▪ PULSE! ▪ AUGUST 1997

One of the liveliest personalities in reggae history, one perhaps too complex for either studio or live recordings to do full justice to, is **Lee "Scratch" Perry**. Vocalist, dub genius, producer and lunatic, his recordings of late have been self-indulgent throwaways. The '70s were arguably his prime time, and three recent archival releases showcase his best. Some of his finest productions were of the vocalist **Junior Byles**, someone whose mental instability perhaps surpassed even Perry's. *Curly Locks: The Best of Junior Byles & the Upsetters* (Heartbeat, ★★★★) collects 22 tunes of classic reggae tunes, including a half dozen previously unreleased sides. Byles' angelically fragile tone is set like a jewel by Perry's studio band, the Upsetters. The plaintive "When Will Better Come" is one of numerous emotionally touching moments. *Upsetter in Dub* (Heartbeat, ★★★½) is a bass lover's dream, and offers a fair sampling of Perry's conservative dub stage (meaning that his stream-of-consciousness rants don't overwhelm the rhythms). Finally, Perry fans will cherish *Arkology*, a three-disc box (Island Jamaica, ★★★★). There are numerous Perry boxes on the market, most U.K. imports, but this is the most intelligently selected and sequenced. From the political punch of "Mr. President" to the ringing falsetto anthem "Police and Thieves," this masterful collection reveals Perry as a sonic craftsman second to none. He bridged so many of reggae's contradictory energies. Laid back yet feverishly passionate, loudmouthed yet meditative, those contraries boiled within Perry, and great music resulted. *Arkology* is as fine a Perry tribute as there will probably ever be.

—NORMAN WEINSTEIN

LEE PERRY
UPSETTER IN DUB
(Heartbeat HB 77, 1997)

PRINCE FAR I AND THE ARABS
CRY TUFF DUB ENCOUNTER CHAPTER ONE
(Pressure Sounds PSCD 13, 1997)

The past couple of years have seen a veritable renaissance of interest in the life and works of Lee "Scratch" Perry. Two decades since the height of his famed Black Ark studio days there have been several magazine articles (including a 20-page cover story in the Beastie Boys' publication, *Grand Royal*), a return to recording with the Mad Professor, and his triumphant live shows in San Francisco even made the "Random Notes" section of *Rolling Stone*.

However, it was most likely the appearance of two spectacular U.K. releases during 1996 which proved that Scratch the producer is more than just a pop culture con. *Heart of the Congos* (Blood and Fire) and *Voodooism* (Pressure Sounds) showcased output from the Black Ark studio where Perry recorded from 1974-79, and then destroyed the studio in a fit of pique. The voluminous sessions recorded there have taken on a mythic quality over the course of a generation. The Congos' cd was probably the most talked about reggae reissue since Marley's *Songs of Freedom*. (Its byzantine history was charted to great effect by David Katz in Vol. 15#1 of *The Beat*). The *Voodooism* cd was more a collection of Black Ark singles, long out of print and fetching plenty of money on the 7" auction lists. Mostly a succession of A-side vocal and B-side dubs, this disk made the Black Ark sound available to collector and non-collector alike. The relative obscurity of many of the artists represented only helped to enhance the reverence for Lee Perry the engineer and dub alchemist.

Heartbeat has released the third in this Black Ark triumvirate, *Upsetter in Dub*. Eighteen dubs which alternate well-known selections from artists like Junior Byles, Junior Murvin and Max Romeo with more obscure tracks from Brent Dowe, the Silvertones and Devon Irons. Concentrating on the version sides of singles recorded primarily in the fertile 1976-77 time frame, *Upsetter in Dub* is the natural progression from *Heart of the Congos* and *Voodooism*. (To many dub cognoscenti, the vocal was only "setting the table" for the dub mix anyway, right?)

One of the hallmarks of this release shows the variety in the Black Ark sound. Some tracks have little vocal echo and others have more intermittent vocalization. On "Babylon Thief Dub" a melodica solo is front and center, spliced over Junior Murvin's vocal trail from "Police and Thieves." This lack of predictability from track to track gives these dubs a loose and spontaneous feel about them. The driving tempos are centered around an impenetrable bass presence which is leavened by a high hat/snare drum treble. All the sounds and effects sandwiched in between contain the authority and creativity of Perry's mix-and-match extemporaneous engineering.

Also prevalent is a reliance on dynamic drum intros and false starts which grab your attention before the weight of the music centers around the heavy bass patterns. "Tedious Dub" has a martial drum cadence and blues guitar lick that is suspended for Murvin's extended falsetto wail. This builds a sense of drama before a swirl of echo buries the submerged vocal down in the mix for a spectral presence. "Rejoice in Skank" also contains a similar double-time riff that quickly slides away for the Silvertones' eerie harmonies left intact from "Give Praises." This time the feedback and double phase shifts rise up from underneath the vocals and break away just before they threaten to overmodulate into a shrill whine.

While the Black Ark phenomenon is characterized by its overall sense of foreboding and minor-key malice, *Upsetter in Dub* also mixes in a few upbeat dubs to change the pace. "Lorna Skank" has an irrepressible bounce and pert keyboard line that supplement the breezy vocal snippets from Junior Byles. The easy-going riddim sparks a general sense of whimsy that makes it perhaps the most enjoyable of the set. Perry's own jaunty take on "Bionic Rats Dub" is a loose and flowing raver punctuated with staccato piano trills and a suffused bass solo. While there is no doubt the relentless fervor of many of the Black Ark singles are what make them so popular, Perry's sly sense of humor certainly crops up on occasion to lighten the mood.

Upsetter in Dub will help fill in some gaps, dubwise, from other Black Ark–related cds from Island, Trojan and Heartbeat. It serves up dub reworkings to such powerful standards like "Solid Foundation" from the Congos, Max Romeo's "War in A Babylon," Junior Byles' "Da Da" and "Better Must Come" and the aforementioned "Police and Thieves." The results of this union between Perry and artist help remind us why these reggae classics are so crucial. Perry used the mixing board as an instrument and coaxed the most ornate and singularly unique sound from these Black Ark sessions. All of these artists have released a variety of subsequent recordings but none have reached the level of sustained recognition as the titles recorded with Lee Perry. The attention to the creation and reinterpretation of the songs included in *Upsetter in Dub* will certainly add to Scratch's legendary status; deservedly so.

There are a lot of similarities between the circumstances of Lee "Scratch" Perry and England's Adrian Sherwood and his On-U Sound label. Sherwood's productions welded an aggressive urban U.K. variant to the Jamaican drum and bass. Not afraid to experiment with found sounds and employing his own "secret" drum mix, he is the next step in dub evolution. He has bridged the gap between Perry's Black Ark and Scientist's Volcano sound of the early '80s. Sherwood's innovations and uncompromising approach to the dub process helped keep the art form alive and thriving in the U.K. when Jamaica switched over to the mechanization of "Sleng Teng" which sent dub into its deep decline there.

But even before On-U helped create "mutant" dub, Sherwood cut his teeth in a more orthodox framework with his own Hitrun label. Working with producer Prince Far I and the core of what became Roots Radics, *Cry Tuff Dub Encounter Chapter One* was the first of four experiments of what dub could become in terms of employing the mixing console as a valid instrument in ways comparable to what Perry accomplished at Black Ark. Pressure Sounds, the On-U roots affiliate, has released this pioneering effort which was originally issued on Hitrun in 1978.

Where Perry was a baroque producer who packed his tracks with so many levels of instrumentation and vocalization that each song appeared to be a smudge of murky sound, Sherwood's mixes on *Cry Tuff* are much more spartan.

—*Robert Nelson*

● MASSIVE ATTACK and LEE 'SCRATCH' PERRY headline this weekend's two-day Essential Music Festival in London's Finsbury Park on August 2-3, with an all-star cast of knob-twiddlers, beatmeisters and dub legends in support; SPIRITUALIZED, SQUAREPUSHER, DEATH IN VEGAS, APHEX TWIN, BENTLEY RHYTHM ACE, GOLDIE and COLDCUT join the Bristol trip-hop collective on Dance Day (August 2), while JUNGLE BROTHERS, HORACE ANDY, MAD PROFESSOR and STEEL PULSE support Perry on Dub Day (3).

ESSENTIAL WEEKENDER
Sunday

LEE 'SCRATCH' PERRY is 290 and very much alive, and Finsbury Park (including Graham Blur and Steve Pulp) are whooping for the old man in the American flag cassock and silvery hat like the redeemer cometh and they may have a point. His is the sound of the mystical gone horizontal, pulverising deep-dub atmospherics from the magic tree flown in on a ley line straight outta Kingston. Bloody fantastic.

In between, he delivers his sermon through what sounds like Bobby Gillespie's Darth Vader mask.

"L. O. V. E!" he spooks, "are you ready kiddies? I come to you from a hole in the sky! I am the tallest man on Earth! I am the sun that shine!"

As the gospel elevations of 'Come Go With Me' see the reggae Merlin conjure some fancy footwork spirited from the grave of James Brown himself in the midst of the 'honk! honk!' of an onstage car horn, we mentally pack the galoshes for V97 – and that, make no mistake, is nothing short of a miracle.

Sylvia Patterson

—New Musical Express 9 August 1997

IF

PRINCE BUSTER'S IN A GOOD MOOD HE'LL LET you feel his head. The King of Blue Beat and Ska will remove his hat, take your fingers and run them along a half-inch high ridge on the top of his cranium where the plates never quite melded together properly after he got laid out by a rock at a dance some 40 years ago. It's a startlingly eloquent answer to the question, What did you do in the Kingston sound system wars?

But then there's hardly an aspect of Prince Buster's four decades in music that even comes close to business as usual. As Coxsone Dodd's adviser-cum-minder-cum-music-selector, the teenage Prince frequently found himself the last line of defence between the Downbeat sound system's equipment and arch rival Duke Reid's rampaging 'security force'. There's one well-documented account of an attack on a Downbeat dance in which Buster was left to fight off, single-handedly, a number of Reid's employees before he could carry the unconscious sound system operator Lee Perry to safety.

(from "ONE STEP BEYOND" by Lloyd Bradley)

MOJO September 1997

Music

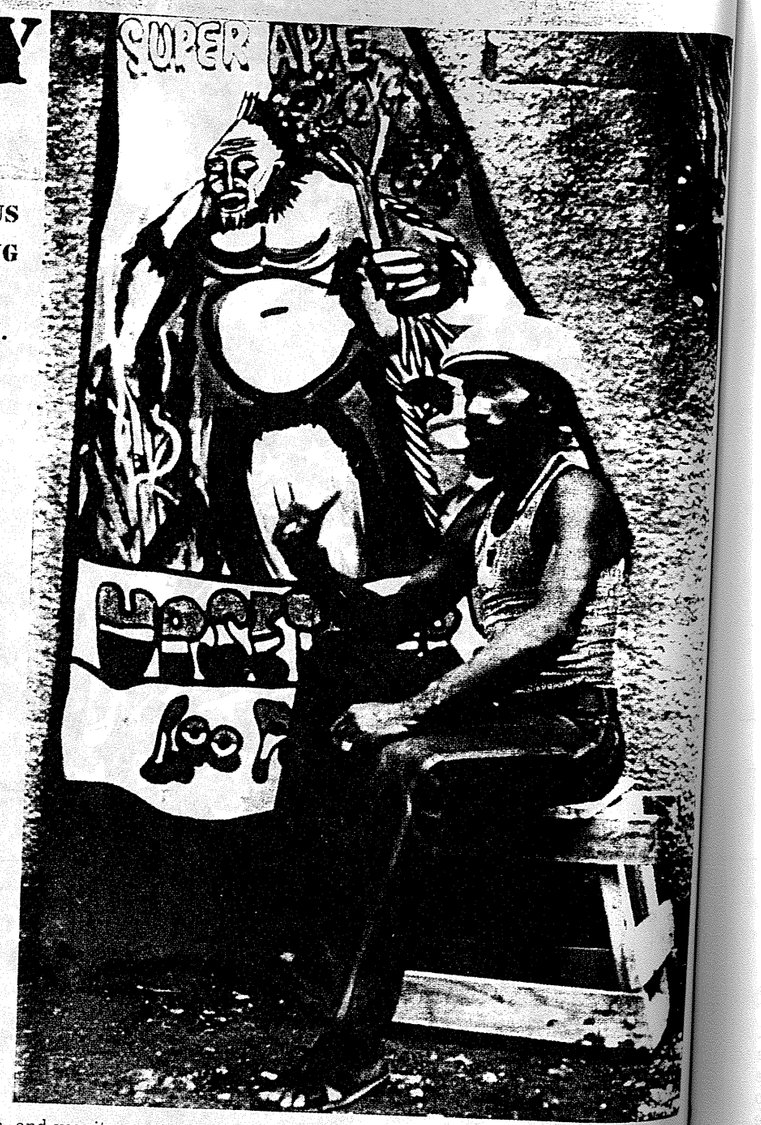
Maritime Hall proprietor Boots Hughston thinks his new record company is the perfect synergistic accompaniment to extend his reach into the San Francisco music scene. Last month Hughston and his partners announced the creation of 2B1 Records, which will pump out live recordings from Maritime shows and, Hughston says, eventually release albums by local acts. "The record company has always been a part of the original dream when we opened the Hall," says Hughston. "We just needed time to get things started." 2B1 Records began recording concerts two years ago, first on video and then with a 48-track machine. By contract, the Maritime tapes every performance, but 2B1 has to get permission from both the artists and their record companies in order to make an album. The first release is a live disc recorded at Lee "Scratch" Perry's first U.S. show in 17 years. 2B1 only pressed 2,000 copies, but the label is already gearing up to double the run for the second pressing. Up next: recordings by Yellowman and Frankie Paul and then big plans for the future. Hughston says the ultimate goal is to sign artists and produce studio releases, which could be good news for local bands. "This will come after securing an international distributor, and that's still a little ways off," says Hughston. (R.A.)

SF Weekly October 15–22, 1997

PICTURE : IAN JENNINGS

LEE "SCRATCH" PERRY

SECONDS #44 FALL 1997



"I AM SURE THAT I AM JESUS CHRIST AND I AM THE LIVING GOD AND MY FANS ARE MY BODY, MY SPIRITUAL BODY. MY FANS HEAR MY VIBE. THEY FEEL MY FEELINGS. THEY HEAR MY MUSIC AND THEY WANT TO GO TO BED AND HAVE SEX."

By Tom Terrell

In the world of music, the deepest creators — the few true geniuses — are as eccentric/mad/fun as Dr. Giggles. Think **Mozart**, **Beethoven** — hell, check **Bird**, **Elvis**, **George Clinton**, **Brian Wilson**. All these dudes have gained immortality not only for the sheer volume and utter originality of their music but also for their exquisite balancing of ego, charisma, style and gallant excess. In their eras, these cats were real characters — *über* macks, so to speak. For my money, in the Twentieth Century, there's only been three guys with The Complete Package: **Sun Ra**, **Fela Anikulapo Kuti** and **LEE "SCRATCH" PERRY**. Each man created a lifestyle/body of work that challenged their respective musical spheres with an alternate reality that meshed with, influenced, and changed the musical culture at large — we talkin' Big Poppas here.

Our text for today is from the Book Of Lee, Black Ark, Chapters '65 through '97. People, this is a story of triumph and despair, of **Wailers** and **Upsetters**, of humor and bitterness and of bass and of Dub. Before you leave here this mo'nin', you will also marvel at the human mind — its invention, its delusion, and yes, its resilience. This is a journey down a road in the spirit world, the land of look-behind. This is the story of the man who changed the future of music many times over — this is the story of Lee "Scratch" Perry.

He was born **Rainford Hugh Perry** in the humble country town of Kendal, Jamaica in 1936. Life was ennui until young Rainford split for Kingston in the late Fifties. Plunging into the depths of the city — shebeens, sound systems, domino gambling — young Rainford changed. Embracing Babylon, he began to call himself Lee Perry The Small Axe. He soon gained street respect as a hard partyer and fighter, a rep that got him hired by the legendary **Prince Buster** as security muscle for his sound system (**Duke Reid** and other rival DJs would frequently send in goons to bust up the competition's dances).

Night after night, Lee toiled in the dances, eventually running the operation. He left Buster to slave in the labs of **Coxsone Dodd**'s legendary salt mines, **Studio One**. In 1966, after seven years, Lee left Coxsone for **Joe Gibbs**, sending a message straight to Coxsone's head called "I Am The Upsetter." After practically inventing Reggae with the song "Long Shot" in '67, the newly-christened Upsetter left Gibbs in a huff with the "fuck you" ditty "People Funny Boy."

Lee's year of divine intervention was 1968: Jah brought to him Drum & Bass revolutionaries the **Barrett** brothers (**Aston** "**Family Man**" and **Carlton** "**Carlie**"). They would become the nucleus of The Upsetters, Reggae's most innovative studio band. The next year, Jah struck twice: The Wailers (**Bob Marley**, **Peter Tosh**, **Bunny Wailer**) hooked up with our man (headline — "Holy Trinity Meets Ark Of The Covenant"). People, the music they created — *Soul Rebel, African Herbsman, Rasta Revolution* — is truly the genesis of The Book Of Bob.

By 1972 it was over, the Wailers on to greater rewards and Lee alone again with only Jah to guide him. Like other prophets before him, he built a sound temple in 1974, naming it **Black Ark**. These were exalted times of Dub alchemy, bass culture, "Punky Reggae Party," "War Inna Babylon," "Roast Fish," and "Cornbread And Best Dressed Chicken(s)." Satan, always attracted by the light, became an uninvited host, bringing in gunman, drugman, deadbeats and wild woman. Driven to madness, Lee burned the Ark down in '79 — chasin' de devil outta Earth. Never looking back (the pillar of salt thing), Lee stepped to England for a long walk in the wilderness. Ten years later he would emerge in Switzerland with a new wife and a new life. Resurrection, redemption and yes, retribution. There is a parable here.

Today, Lee Perry a.k.a. Scratch, **Pipecock Jackxson**, **Ringo**, **Super Ape** and **The Upsetter** is still singing and swinging and having a ball. He's a certified genius who is the undisputed Dubmaster, godfather of sampling, **Nostradamus** of Drum & Bass, and the Duke Of Hazard. His old record label, **Island**, is about to release *Arkology*, a killah three-CD retrospective of many of his bomb joints. He's on a Rococo tour with the **Mad Professor** and the **Ariwa** posse and he's still one cosmic conundrum. Even through this interview was conducted by phone at ten A.M. Eastern Standard Time, "Scratch" was rapping six hours away and hurtling six synapses ahead. What you are about to read is unexpurgated, undeliberated, unrestrained — scabrous, even — Lee Perry. Warning: This is no day at the beach.

PERRY: Hello, man!
SECONDS: *How you doing?*
PERRY: I am the president of the International Universal Worldwide. Rock Music, Pop Music, Jazz Music, Classical Music, Dub Music — and I'm the creator. Are you taping?
SECONDS: *I'm definitely taping.*
PERRY: Right. I'm the creator of Dub Music. My message to all the singers is to change their style around and run for cover because Dub Rappers and Dub Rock is taking over. The now generation is in the Dub zone, from the children's zone — and the children are the future. Love Dub Music to their soul. Dreadlocks better change their style and get in fashion because Reggae's out of style and Dub is not. Reggae's out of style — it's too boring. **Chris Blackwell** brought all the boring Reggae back. Chris Blackwell has to change his name. Can't be Blackwell. His name should be "Whitewell." I am Black. Blackwell is my well and "Whitewell" is his well. I take the Black back and take it to the Dub market, the Black Dub market. I take back my black well from Chris Blackwell and give him back his white hell. We're still doing business but he's no longer in the black well, he's only in the white hell.
SECONDS: *That's better than **Bunny Wailer** calling him "Whitewurst."*
PERRY: How can a White man be in a Black well? That's not right. Something's wrong. Somebody make a bad spell. You understand it?
SECONDS: *Can I ask you some questions?*
PERRY: Of course! You can ask me any question. I'm open.
SECONDS: *Let's go back a little bit. Tell me about the **Duke Reid** and **Coxsone Dodd** days. What did you learn that helped shape your vision?*
PERRY: Duke Reid and those people? They couldn't give me a vision. They were doing Dancehall music and fighting each other for money and power. I wanted to be the best sound. I am coming from a street child background. I'm coming from a water background — I'm a Piscean.
SECONDS: *I'm a Cancer.*
PERRY: I didn't learn anything from Coxsone at **Downbeat Studio**. It was taken with me from the country. It was all in me, because my brain is a record.
SECONDS: *Ah ...*
PERRY: My heart is a drum and my brain is a bass. My heart is a drummerman playing his beat. I'm a genie and not a human being. Okay, you can continue now.
SECONDS: *Tell me about your first successes, "People Funny Boy," "Django," "Return Of Django," "The Upsetter." What did you learn from those?*
PERRY: After me discover — me never know I was a genie till eight years ago, when I realized I was a genie. And I was good luck, so when I go against people, they all of a sudden go bomb. I don't have to do anything for them because my presence is the power of love. The power of love creates them and builds them up. Eight years ago, I discovered I'm a genie I decided to come out as a Reggae and make it fall and create a new beat. Every song I record I record in Coxsone's studio and he steal me tapes. The man have always have a way to steal people's tapes, keep people's music. He can't help himself, he's a thief. He cannot help being a thief. What I discovered was they were parasites and treating it with disrespect. I just had to pack up the Reggae and say, "I want to make a sacrifice," and I write "Punky Reggae Party" and I create it. Bob Marley wasn't even there when I was writing it, he was in London, Great Britain.
SECONDS: *That's a real old song, then.*
PERRY: When I was writing "Punky Reggae Party," they were drinking alcohol and eating meat. I was a cannibal, half-cannibal, and I wasn't even myself. So I write "Punky Reggae Party" and **Bob Marley** wasn't there. I tried to record at **Island Records**' studio but it didn't have any sound, it was not really what I was seeking for. I take it to Jamaica and **Joe Gibbs**' studio. Recorded and none of The Wailers was even there to play on it. **Family Man** was not there, **Carlie** was not there, none of **The Wailers** was there playing on it. He was about to lose one of his legs in Miami. I fly to Miami to heal him. "Punky Reggae Party," and mind you, I'm not even on it and that's why I come out as the Reggae. We had so many gunmen and politicians and natty dreadlocks in the party. So Jah crashed the Reggae party and go Dub way. That's why "the people funny" mean. "People funny bwoy." People want you to help them when they're down and out and then turn big shots and when you need help, they no help — they laugh at you, they say you mad and crazy.
SECONDS: *I remember the **Arthur Conley** song "People Sure Act Funny When They Get A Little Money."*
PERRY: That's why I burned down the **Black Ark Studio**. They made it work out so they burn out my brain so me can learn how to burn out evil people's brain as well.
SECONDS: *Why did you build Black Ark?*
PERRY: The Black Ark is the brain. I created it in Jamaica. Then I discovered Jamaica has too much politicians, too much dreads, and too much thieves. Too much beggars. Too much rude bwoy would dress up at night and drag you out of bed. Bob Marley and Bunny Wailer would send some for me to take me out of me bed. Ask me, "Wake up bwoy! What your name?" I was wearing a cap like what I'm wearing now. They robbed the cap because light was on it blinking. Something happened to them that they dropped

the cap and run over the fringe of it. I don't know what happened. Me burn down the Ark because me discover the Ark was a way of talking to God and me take dread inside and innoculate it with corruption. The dreads corrupted the Cocaine brain and were destroying the firmament and the sky and didn't know. Thirty-eight years ago I know that I was a talented creative genius. I was raised in time with swine. You cannot cast pearls before swine. They don't know what it's worth.

SECONDS: *How did you get the musicians to play the sounds that you heard?*

PERRY: The sound that I heard coming out of my brain — my brain is a bass. My brain is 1936, the twenty-eighth day of March under a quake. My brain is like an earthquake that was born on the twenty-eighth of March, 1936; it's a record date. So what I hear comes to my ears because I'm from another race and I hear about invisible spirit. I believe in the phantom because the phantom exists. And you know about one man's country — well, I'm talking about the African jungle.

SECONDS: *You created Dub Music. How did that happen?*

PERRY: The jungle have the power. The jungle create the drum, the sound. The jungle send the drum. The drum is the phantom. The drummer was a person before he was a drum. He was **Marcus Garvey**. Then the brain that I had before he was flesh and blood, he's imperial **Selassie**, the computer in my head. Then I was taken up by a UFO that placed a computer in my head. The American government don't want the people to know that UFOs exist but UFOs exist.

SECONDS: *How did you translate that sound through the machines to make Dub Music?*

PERRY: Because the sounds come through my ears from the extraterrestrial and the cherub beams and the angels that fly and protect the Ark Of The Covenant. We were fighting against the last raiders of the Ark. It was an Armageddon, so the angels were teleporting to me what was going to happen so I put them on Dub. Even though I don't have the tapes — they were stolen by **Pauline** and my son to sell them to Chris Blackwell. So Chris Blackwell think him have the Ark. Him have all the old dubs, I have nothing from those creations, all those creations were stolen. Someone sent a gunman by Bob Marley and Bunny Wailer's and some take away by Pauline and some by **Tony**, a guy in England, some by **Adrian**, all over the place, some by **Joseph**, some by **Errol**, some by **RJ**, some by **GG**, some by **Niney** — all the producers in Jamaica have my tapes.

SECONDS: *So you don't have any of your tapes?*

PERRY: None of those tapes, nothing like those in my possession.

DAVID CORIO

"MY HEART IS A DRUM AND MY BRAIN IS A BASS. MY HEART IS A DRUMMERMAN PLAYING HIS BEAT. I'M A GENIE AND NOT A HUMAN BEING."

SECONDS: *They can steal your tapes, but they can't steal you.*

PERRY: No, I don't have nothing to lose. I never lose yet. I can't lose anything. I have nothing to lose — you know why?

SECONDS: *Why?*

PERRY: There is no one on this planet that have anything. The Earth is the love. And the Earth is the mother and the nature that grows the plants, the trees and flowers. And there's no man that comes here with any bank account and house. Show me a man come here driving in a car. Here comes two puss and come here with nothing, not even clothes on, not even knickers or briefs on. A couple years later, they started to grow higher than you and them front. Don't even want their mother to see them cock. They're just interested in getting rich and all the money is their idea. They make a mistake. All the tapes on record, they're making mistakes. Their mistake is my Irish Sweepstakes.

SECONDS: *They don't know how you hear.*

PERRY: They don't know how I think. I'm not stupid to think like a human being. Human beings love to eat meat. When you start to eat meat, you become a cannibal. I used to eat — I stop it.

SECONDS: *I know what you mean. I'm a vegetarian too.*

PERRY: I'm thinking that you are.

SECONDS: *Things changed for me when I became a vegetarian.*

PERRY: Couldn't breathe properly, right?

SECONDS: *Let's talk about some of your classic productions. People who recorded with you never made good records after they stopped recording with you. How come?*

PERRY: Alright, I was sent here to create that style. Instead of we have one thing going all the while, people used to be bored when they hear the same thing all the while. They always want to hear something different, to have something with a new vibration. So I create those things because Heaven sent me to create that proper vibration as my legacy. People hear it and know that's really a legacy — though they steal the master tapes. But that doesn't stop me, because I'm creating something that when you hear it, you're going to say, "Well, I can't believe you were creating music all your life and you're still creating music right now." I'm creating for your baby that's coming now.

SECONDS: *Talk about Bob Marley. When you recorded The Wailers, they didn't sound the same after they left you.*

PERRY: There was no use teaching them anymore.

SECONDS: *What do you think Marley's legacy is?*

PERRY: My spiritual collection of Marley was a spritual creation. Marley creation was Cocaine creation, say, two different creations. One's spiritual and one is Cocaine. I don't touch Coke, right? I smoke Ganja, Herb, Black Hash, but I don't Coke. So all my creation is spiritual creation. When he leave me, he go to Chris Blackwell, then he was with politician **Edward Seaga** and Seaga is the main agent in Jamaica for Cocaine. So that's where he start making Cocaine music and lose his brain as well. He worship his lock so much and die without it. Die as a baldhead. When he was with me, he was supporting the spirit. He was getting the support. He leave me and then start to support politics for transfer Cocaine. He even did different music now. One's spiritual music and one's Cocaine music.

SECONDS: *You don't feel that Bob Marley's music is righteous?*

PERRY: Righteousness? My education say righteousness exalts a nation and exalts creation. We don't care who the person thinks he is, he's still gonna die. That commander had a plan to live forever and always young and strong. Don't feel no pain, no strain, don't need be or a want.

SECONDS: *The original Wailers band — that was your band.*

PERRY: Of course. Everything was mine and they come a run and take over and tell you what goes on. From Coxsone, I write "People Funny Boy." You just look at the people funny and see what goes on. It's all on the "People Funny Boy" tape. They take over the band. They take over everything. They take over the tape, they send gunman to take the master tape. They send it to Chris Blackwell because I was keeping all those tapes, knowing that one day the motherfucker's gonna come because I've got it. My dirty gal, them call her Pauline, have a son from me. She keep the tape and sell them on to her Cocaine friends. When me start to look for the tapes, there were no tapes. The studio have to burn down because everything's gone, actually.

SECONDS: *Did Bob Marley hire gunmen to steal your tapes?*

PERRY: I was in my bed sleeping and gunmen come in there for me. He wasn't there; some wear mask over their face and come for Bob Marley and Wailers tape. Whatever thing happened, I love the music. I'm not prejudiced against Jamaicans but I'm telling you that Jamaica's going to fucking suffer.

SECONDS: *And it has suffered since that time?*

PERRY: They don't fucking start to suffer yet.

SECONDS: *In 1979, you burned down Black Ark and went to England. What was that experience like?*

PERRY: Well, I was in Jamaica when the suffering start to hit me because they take away everything. They put bad luck 'pon me car. The woman I was living with was loaded up with bad luck because she used to load my car with dreads and then my good luck been taken away by dread and dread bad luck load up me car and load up me yard. Then me have to leave and go to London. It was kind of rough but we made some tours in London and create new sounds. Then I come to Switzerland and we create a new spiritual life.

SECONDS: *So leaving was good for you?*

PERRY: It was good for me. The changes were good for me.

SECONDS: *During the Eighties, you worked with White Reggae bands and* ***Adrian Sherwood****.*

PERRY: Yeah, I was bringing up new guys. Some new blood, new people in the business.

SECONDS: *Could you talk about your work with Adrian?*

PERRY: The problem he has, Adrian has, he had more than a problem because he don't know that I am the master. And no one can tell me what to do and he always want to tell me what to do. He wanted to come up to Jamaica and produce some more Jamaicans. That was his vision because he know what would happen. It would become very big. I felt it in Jamaica. Jah didn't want me to go back there and do it again and because of that, Adrian didn't want to stop it. He make tricks to get me back in Jamaica then me cut him up. Definitely.

SECONDS: *What about* ***Mad Professor****?*

PERRY: Well, somebody have to be there to help me. He won't be my right hand but for the time being, he'll be available to do all what he must do. He's much better than Adrian.

SECONDS: *You did a single called "Judgement Ina Babylon" where you called Chris Blackwell a vampire. What's the real story behind that?*

PERRY: Because if he wasn't a vampire, he would never buy my master tape from Pauline. He must try to buy them from me. Even though they're going to put them out, I make a big deal with them instead of a little cheap deal because Island no have enough money to give me. Him always buy old house and old relics because he's a vampire. That's the way he lives. A vampire must live off of blood and somebody must provide the blood for him. Old house and old tape.

SECONDS: *I interviewed Chris Blackwell and he said you were a very brilliant producer.*

PERRY: Him say I'm the most brilliant producer. This is true because him know the truth. He know I'm the most brilliant producer — why didn't he give me any royalty on "Punky Reggae Party" and most of the early Bob Marley them put out? He must have something against him, he must fucking know that. Him know that I'm the most brilliant producer, Mr. Blackwell know that and said that and him know that most of the songs that was written and named by Bob Marley was Mr. Perry and he didn't say anything. Then he's a fucking vampire and him know it.

SECONDS: *In my interview, Blackwell said that you were pretending to be crazy but then you burnt your own studio down, so you must really be crazy.*

PERRY: Of course. Why shouldn't I? That's where they were getting energy from. That's where the energy went after Bob Marley died. That's why me burn it down, because him leave me and stop his spiritual works with God and work with the Devil, Edward Seaga and Chris Blackwell. The floorplan was the Ark Of The Covenant and I burnt it down. Then the fucker died.

SECONDS: *I understand you're saying music is a healing force and when you disrespect it, it will come back on you.*

PERRY: Definitely.

SECONDS: *During the Eighties, you did a Dub version of* ***Terrence Trent D'Arby****'s "Sign Your Name."*

PERRY: Somebody asked me to meet with Terrence Trent D'Arby. They send the tape to Switzerland and I did it in my studio here. I enjoy doing it. [laughs]

SECONDS: *Have you remixed anybody else since then?*

PERRY: Not for a long time because I am in Switzerand and it's only business people want to contact me. I was in Jamaica and there was no respect and they handle the business cheap. So me come to Switzerland and live and make a nice living expensive. I don't want to leave because I can't afford it. [laughs] Most of the people don't call me anymore — I'm glad I'm not mixing for dreads anymore.

SECONDS: *Because they don't want to pay?*

PERRY: I don't want to mix with anything that's not up to my standard because I'm not cheap anymore. I'm expensive.

SECONDS: *I can hear in "Sign Your Name" Drum & Bass, Trip Hop — what people are doing now.*

PERRY: I'm very glad to know that people are copying. You know why?

SECONDS: *Why?*

PERRY: I would be very sad if they wasn't doing that. I would think that I would be wasting time on Earth. Like when they are copying my sound, it made me so happy that I can't believe it. I'm extremely happy. I'm not wasting time. The master computer said "Copy me for if you don't

copy me there is no one else on the planet Earth to copy."

SECONDS: *In 1990,* From The Secret Laboratory *came out. On the title tune you sing about, "Rockin' and reelin' and having a ball / Singing and swingin' straightjacket and all." Were you making fun of your enemies who called you mad?*

PERRY: Of couse. I said, "I'm coming so I'm going to wear a straightjacket." I am a mental commander. I am now one-hundred-percent telepathic. I'm now one-hundred-percent S.O.S. This is a live S.O.S. I could see who's going to wear straightjacket. Right? Because of the action of the music, the music is Merlin and the music is the great magic master. So the music played a game with kiddies and children. The people with bad behavior and bad manners, music mashed them up. Ya understand?

SECONDS: *When I first heard that song, I said, "People think he's crazy. He's not crazy."*

PERRY: Of course. I want them to think I am crazy. If they don't think I'm crazy, they wouldn't be interested. If there's nothing about you, people won't be interested. You have to play crazy or get mad, do something bad like what me do and burn down the studio. That make them really believe that I was crazy. There's no other studio like that where that sound coulda come from, at no time. It cannot be copied. It cannot be copied. That was the only studio in the world. That was the real of the Ark Of The Covenant.

"HEAVEN SENT ME TO CREATE THAT PROPER VIBRATION AS MY LEGACY."

SECONDS: *Rumor has it that during the rehearsals for the* Secret Labratory *tour, you spent all the tour money. What's the real story?*

PERRY: Let me tell you something about Island's idea. Island's idea about artists is not good. When they take the tour, they book tours for their artists. When you book tours, you make money but tell the artists it's a promotion. So they take the money and give the artists a little change. The promotion, they use the artists to promote and get to pay the artists nothing. So me said, "You have to pay me now. Me demand this amount. Pay down first. Give me this amount to open the first two show." They said they would be there with the money but me discover that the money wouldn't be there so me don't go on. They didn't want to pay me. They wanted to use me like a little **Burning** — burnt-out — **Spear**. He just burn out. They wanted me to pay for the tour from me royalties. Me know that money been collect from tour. Tour pay money. Them supposed to pay me, they want to collected it out of me royalties. Leave me pay them for a promotion.

SECONDS: *Oh, that's crazy.*

PERRY: More than crazy. [laughs]

SECONDS: *Tell me about this new three-CD anthology,* Arkology. *Did you have anything to do with it?*

PERRY: Nothing at all. I was not there, I did not choose a track. The paper was sent to me that had the selection, that Island Records have these tapes and they want to offer me money for promotion and I have to sign this document before I can get the money. But when me investigate the tapes, they didn't come from me, they come from Pauline and other people. They found what they needed and they wanted me to sign it and then I said, "Mr. Blackheart, me give it up. Here's my blood, Mr. Vampire."

SECONDS: *But did they pay you?*

PERRY: They said they wanted to give me three thousand pounds for the promotion and to sign the paper that says the tape belongs to them. Because they buy the tapes them black market. Yuh understand? Me said, "No, no way." We come end up at ten thousand advance and royalties me never gonna get. They never pay nobody no royalty yet.

SECONDS: *What is it like working in Switzerland? How has your wife helped you?*

PERRY: My wife helped me out with a place to live. Without her as a wife, I'd still be living in Jamaica. I'd have to be in Jamaica working with Coxsone. I would never like to go back to work with him. Here, I'll be protected from politicians and gunmen and dreads.

SECONDS: *What's Lee Perry's philosophy, your world view and life vision?*

PERRY: My vision? My world is children and sex is my religion that bring children. So the woman's pussy is a spaceship. Out of the woman's pussy we come along on the planet Earth. So, my religion is sex.

SECONDS: *And what's your philosophy?*

PERRY: Dub Music.

SECONDS: *Could you explain that a little bit more?*

PERRY: Before, in the beginning, sex — my religion— and Dub — my philosophy — I was drinking rum and my cock get soft. So me stop drink rum and stop eat meat and my cock get stiff again and not decide to die. It's just getting stiff and the older I get, it's just getting stiffer. And the older me get, the younger me get. And the older me get, the wiser me get. And the cock gets stronger, stiffer, and bigger. So then me realize, say the sex is my religion and the Dub is my philosophy. So when me put them together and out of my mind, out of my brain, I put fucking to music. So that's why the music what you hearing is the living fucking in your feelings. Right? You have to be in the living fuck because the living fuck brings children.

SECONDS: *That makes sense.*

PERRY: So it end up on titty. That's basical fuck.

SECONDS: *Do you attach any spiritual vibe to Ganja?*

PERRY: The spiritual vibe is the water because I was baptized and I believe in **Jesus Christ**. I believe in Jesus Christ every person. But ask me why.

SECONDS: *Why?*

PERRY: Because I am Jesus Christ.

Arkology

by Richard Henderson

BLACK ARK was more than a studio, the room was an extension of Perry's consciousness, a peripheral lobe for his brain. He created a sound within The Black Ark's confines that most reggae enthusiasts can still identify from the first beat—a crunchy, lo-fi ambience that set many of roots reggae's best voices against a band that meshed like a Porsche's transmission. Scratch colored their sound with a patina of his own devising, one that blended the grit of a bullhorn and the darkness at the bottom of a well with the sweep of a jet engine's slipstream. Others have tried to copy this sound in the succeeding years; none have succeeded. The harvest of songs from this period could fill several box sets; luckily, a great three-disc compendium, *Arkology* (Island Jamaica) is currently in our midst. The collection was assembled and annotated by Scratch confidant Dave Katz and Steve Barrow, a Cockney and original Modern—"We didn't call 'em Mods then. WE were Moderns," he instructs, in the thickest East End accent—who became this planet's great reggae historian. Island distributed several albums by Scratch-produced acts in the mid-'70s (Max Romeo's *War In a Babylon*; Junior Murvin's *Police and Thieves*; George Faith's *To Be a Lover*; "talkover" artist Jah Lion's *Columbia Colly*; the instrumental collection *Super Ape* by Perry's house band, the Upsetters; and perhaps best of all, the Heptones' *Party Time*); *Arkology* collates songs from all these and more (such as duet harmonies from The Congos and reedy drafts of melodica played by Augustus Pablo). The presentation usually involves the extended single versions heretofore available only on Jamaican pressings, complete with the dub versions, which lurked on the singles' B-sides. All feature Perry's remarkable session stalwarts, the Upsetters—men such as bassist Boris Gardiner and Winston Wright, who played the spongy, cheesy-sounding keyboard parts intrinsic to Perry's signature sound. (After The Black Ark's demise, I visited the island and saw Gardiner playing in a Montego Bay hotel lounge. He did Mac Davis covers for 90 minutes, the net effect of which was flattening, to put it kindly.)

Scratch created a tough-as-Teflon sound, one which is still potent and continues to inspire.

As is always the case with commemorative sets of this kind, the booklet is half the battle. Katz and Barrow do not disappoint, loading the pages with repros of rare single labels, close-ups of Perry's control room technology (primitive even by the measure of the day), discarded versions of album artwork, and revealing photographs of Perry, both at the peak of his endeavor and later, sitting amidst the wreckage of his creation. In these pictures, his eyes are milky, glazed over, and his sinewy arms hang limply. The Black Ark's walls, always subject to Perry's whimsical sense of decor (his dining room was adorned with framed lobby stills from *The Magnificent Seven*), are covered floor-to-ceiling with illegible graffiti. Just as the sound of the studio suffered from his own laissez-faire approach to maintenance—cleaning oxide and accumulated THC residue from his tape recorder with the sleeve of his T-shirt, for instance—so did the look of the place come to mirror a tangled mind increasingly unable to focus on making music. As with the Beach Boys' architect Brian Wilson before him, living up to the image of a mad scientist became increasingly a priority for Scratch, and finally an affliction from which he never truly recovered.

Scratch's prolixity within his Black Ark was nothing less than astonishing. It was also self-immolating, metaphorically and literally. The decade's end saw Perry's musical vision obscured, his mind in tatters and his studio reduced to a smoldering husk—torched, as most agree, by his own hand for reasons not yet fully understood. He continues to this day as a solo artist; the latter-day records are not so much musical as they are character turns, mostly clownish at that, playing off an audience's suspicions concerning his quixotic nature. Making albums now seems just an excuse to keep his hand in the music industry, which is fine, I guess. There is proof, however, 52 songs worth on *Arkology* alone, that a substantially different Lee Perry burned like magnesium a generation's time ago. Fully as strange and arresting today as then, the sounds from his Black Ark could easily have proved as fugitive as the colors on the wall of a mummy's tomb. Scratch created a tough-as-Teflon sound, one which is still potent and continues to inspire. Quoted in *Arkology's* booklet, the legendary reggae pianist Theophilus Beckford nails it: "Impossible t'ing, Lee Perry, Scratch—very good producer." S

LEE "SCRATCH" PERRY
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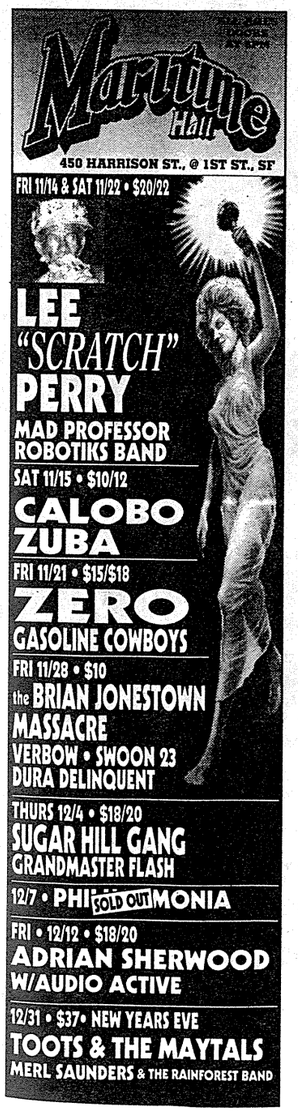
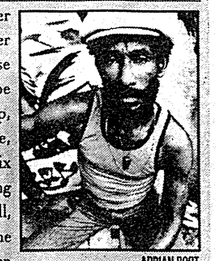


Lee "Scratch" Perry

Palookaville, November 13th • Maritime Hall, November 14th


ADRIAN BOOT

Legendary reggae producer /performer and dub pioneer Lee "Scratch" Perry, whose ongoing influence can be heard in today's hip hop, drum 'n' bass and reggae, returns to California for six dates in November, including two at the Maritime Hall, where he recorded the recently released live CD on the venue's 2b1 label. As with many brilliant innovators, Perry is often given to eccentric extremes, such as one day deciding to torch his Black Ark studio, so you never know exactly how his shows are going to turn out. But then that's exactly what makes them so well worth attending.

BAM / NOVEMBER 7, 1997

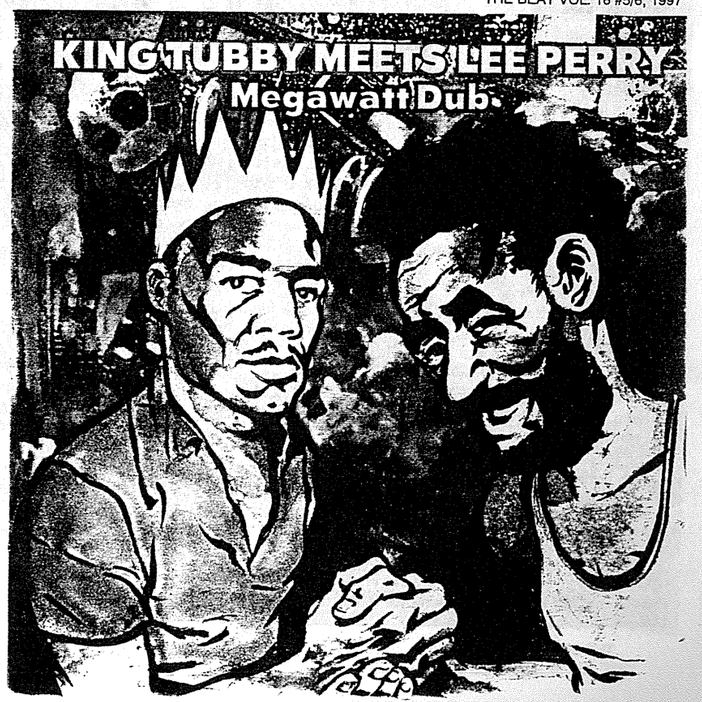
—BILLY JAM

Shanachie released the disc pictured (below) in October. It is compiled from dubs of Watty Burnett singles from the seventies variously produced by King Tubby, Lee Perry and Phillip Smart.

Elsewhere in this issue a bevy of *Beat* writers tackles **Lee "Scratch" Perry**'s just-released three-volume *Arkology* (Island). A very different side of Scratch can be heard on ***Technomajikal*** (ROIR), which bears the fair warning "Beware—Genetic Mutations of the Super Ape" on the front cover. The tracks are the result of what must have been a bizarre session with Yello's Dieter Meier—Perry reportedly refused to enter the studio and contributed his vocals via headphones and microphone from outside. Vocals in hand, Meier recut the original tracks and the cd includes original and alternate versions of such titles as "UFO Attack," "L.S.D.—L.S.P." and others. As different from the "historical" Lee Perry productions as night from day, this Upsetter-gone-Techno set showcases Scratch as singer, lyricist and cultural icon of the '90s.

The tracks are super-clean digital throbber with overlay of acoustic instruments like flute sitar and non-digital *didjeridu* slightly reminiscent of machine-processed Dub Syndicate. Scratch restates themes and concepts from previous word improvisations and mixes in current obsessions, riffing with the '90s groove as if he too has swallowed an echoplex, displaying an agility that approaches spoken-word poetry, singing and the dj style from a cross-dimensional vortex unbounded by time, thought or the sense of mere mortals, although there seems to be a recurrent theme that involves getting paid for the session. Background vocals that could have been arranged by Ray Conniff add—as if it needed it—a taste of the bizarre.

BY CHUCK FOSTER



Showtime With Scratch

The rumors began last January: "Lee Perry is coming to San Francisco." Those of us who had heard regular variations on this tantalizer for over a decade could only laugh—the Upsetter had never performed on the West Coast and we weren't holding our breath now. But soon it became apparent that yes, Scratch was indeed slated to play two shows in early April at the Maritime Hall, a sprawling complex which has become the Bay Area's premier roots music venue. Still, even up to the day of the first show, doubts were rampant. Imagine then the general delight when the man himself strolled into a press conference a few hours before showtime, accompanied by his chaperone the Mad Professor and his lovely Swiss Family Perry.

As it turned out, what it really took to finally entice Scratch to California was Disneyland, but he had also been convinced to perform in at least one city while in the U.S. So here he was at last. Those historic shows, with Scratch in stellar form backed by the Mad Professor's sterling Robotics band, went off wonderfully in front of packed houses despite being almost completely ignored by the local media. Highlights from the concerts have been compiled on a live cd for the first release on 2B1 records out of San Francisco, and Scratch apparently had such a good time plans were immediately made to bring him back to California, with another Maritime show slated for Nov. 15, another the night before in the fabled redwoods at the Mateel Community Center in Redway, and maybe more elsewhere in the state.

At one point during the weekend I was able to meet with Perry for an "outerview"—"handing over from my inner world, to the outer world" as he puts it—and he was in high spirits, refusing the offer of a chair, roaming about whomever's office we had invaded in the Maritime. First, though, he set up a small shrine of candles and other items, rolled up something sweet from the Northern California forests, clouded up the room sufficiently to his liking, and announced "showtime!" I took this to mean that my questions would now be considered. What follows are some excerpts, translated to the best of my ability, from our chat and the press conference. The constant laughter and coughing has been excised. We end with a bit of a duet on a new song which I hope appears in some form on a recording one day.

The impression I was left with was that of a kindly and sly older gentleman, with many struggles in his past but who has finally come to peace with himself and with the world. He's having fun now, both onstage and off. Regarding just how much of his legendary "madman" persona is real and how much is an image which he projects as is expected of him, I have my own opinion; read on and judge for yourself. There is no doubt about his contributions to reggae music and beyond, however, and it was a privilege and a delight to spend a little time with him.

Showtime, indeed!

Steve Heilig: Welcome, sir. We've been waiting for you a long time. Can you tell us why you chose San Francisco to perform in after all these years?

Lee Perry: You mean, why did San Francisco choose Lee Scratch Perry? Because San Francisco looking for a doctor, to give the patient a live injection and perform a miracle magical operation to keep San Francisco alive. So I am here to safe who love Lee Scratch Perry from the jungle, to save the humble, who love dub music, drum and bass. I leave the reggae rat race to the big dogs. I come here to take over your money. I will bless your money for you.

Q: And what are you going to perform for us while you are here? Old songs, new songs...

A: Tonight I will make old things become young things, I will make old men into young men, and old women into young women, and old dogs into young dogs, and old love into young love—that's what I'm here to do tonight. To change the face of the earth, change the weather, change vibration, change feelings, bring back the one love one unity, and bring back man to one God one human destiny—love your neighbors and love your enemies like
yourself. And wish unto me good like you wish unto yourself. so that we can live together and make the money flow and make the energy flow. And not go back into bankruptcy.

Q: Right on to that. But let's go way back—I have not heard much about your childhood. What was it like?

A: When I was very young my family was very poor. I was born in Hanover, in Jamaica. I could do nothing, I cyaan be working for money, so I am lazy. If you want me to go work for you I cyaan do that, so I was bound to be an entertainer. My parents got a job from God to bring me to this earth but they could not support me. They didn't know who I was, I didn't know who I was, until I become.... 61. Now I am 62 and I start to realize who I am.

Q: What was school like for you?

A: I discovered that teachers could teach me nothing. I refused to waste my time listening. I go to trees and flowers in the jungle and have them show I what I should know, learn I what I should learn, show I what I should see. Teach I not to see evil, to hear or speak evil. So that when evil cry I don't hear. The birds and trees are the original extraterrestrial doctors. But these people are so stupid, killing birds. They are bringing down destruction on themselves, killing all the bird doctors. The tree doctor is the greatest doctor, the African doctor, the ganja doctor...

Q: Did you start singing when you were a young child?

A: If I did singing then I would have been Michael Jackson! Hah hah!

Q: How did you hook up with Coxson Dodd and Studio One?

A: I did have to, otherwise I never reach here. The only way was to go into the teeth of the criminals and the crooks and the parasites, the vampires, until we cannot take anymore. See one taking your blood and know they need your blood to survive, but don't let them take it in larger buckets.

Q: So you escaped?

A: I have to. How will the children survive?

Q: So then you formed the Upsetters band...

A: I once planned the Upsetter band, the upsetting was so upsetting it upset even I. They want to take over things and they was upset and they become reggae boys and reggae this and they become Wailers. OK. So I put all the things that was upsetting away. I am the Upsetter, anything that is still upsetting me I have to get rid of it, exterminate it, to upset what is upsetting me.

Q: And you went on to build your own Black Ark studio, to rule the reggae world...

A: Selassie sent I to Jamaica before him, to clear the way for him.

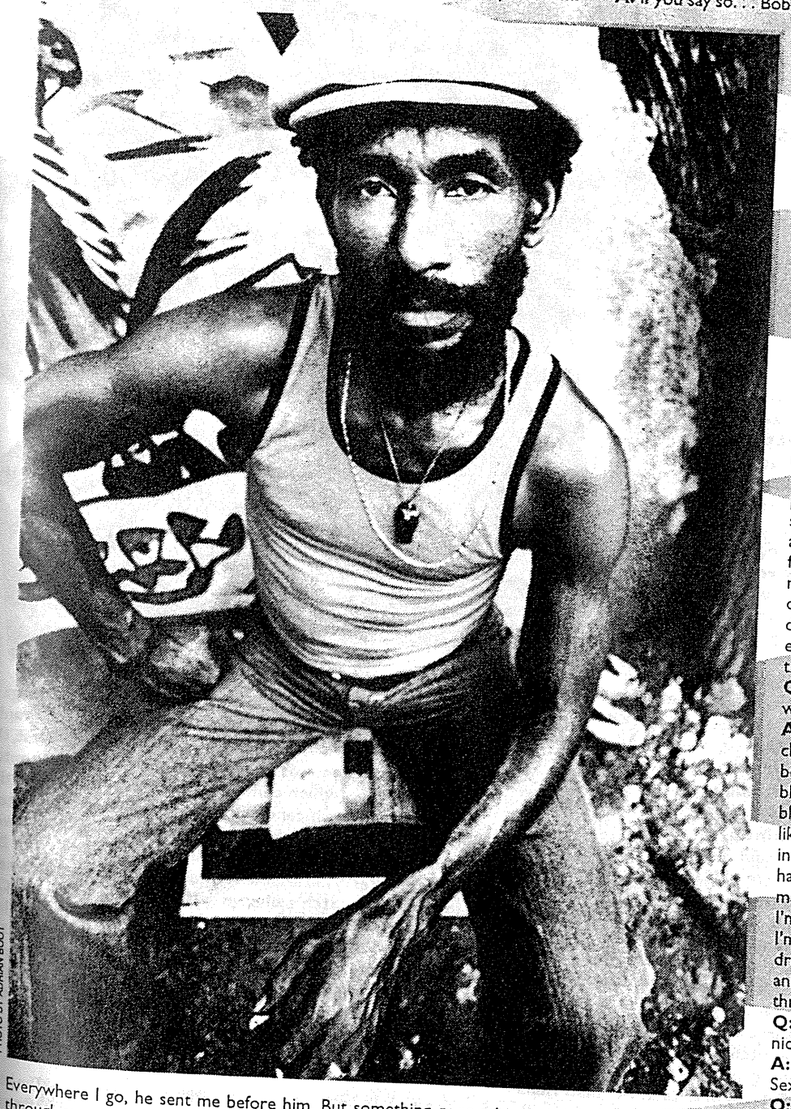


PHOTO BY ADRIAN BOOT

Everywhere I go, he sent me before him. But something gone mix up, through money. And because of mixup I want nothing to do with the name reggae, but whoever love up, I will bless them as they take it. But I want to carry on a future in dub music, I put deadly reggae away for a ransom. I love reggae music still, but the force that they put upon me in the Black Ark studio, I give up the reggae to save my life. I love reggae, but when you advertise reggae it go on radio and become a giant boom and they cannot control it, and want to kill those people who make reggae, as when you are alive you are worth nothing and when you are dead you are worth something, so when I would be dead my reggae tape would be worth more. I not throw it away, but I not going back there in full person, because it kinda deadly, ok? I send you a prophet but music could not save the life of the prophet. What I believe in can save my life, if it cannot save my life I cannot believe in it.

Q: This prophet—is that Bob Marley?

A: If you say so. . . Bob Marley was my best friend but he have a witchy nose, and it make him a bit witchy.

Q: You have a new box set of music from Black Ark times. This is interesting, considering your history with Chris Blackwell. How did you come to do this?

A: Well, maybe some things come new from inside him. Not from me. Me can neither beg nor bow. I am bigger than Jamaica, I am trying to tell you. You think I would ask him to have my music out?

Q: There has been an explosion of other releases with your name on them. Some are good and seem to be your real music; some are not. How does this make you feel? Do you get paid for any of this?

A: Listen, all the other things people are doing now, it's not hurting me, it's promoting me. They not giving me no money. Nobody pay me anything. Only Mad Professor, RAS, Pressure... That the living truth. Why should I cry? They are promoting me, taking the money, getting rich. I'm not gonna take anyone to court. Listen, what a man sow, so shall he reap. These are only proving that if I didn't leave Jamaica I would not still be alive, because they need money so much and they need a figurehead to make the money for them. And if they can't make money from me one way, the need to make it another, dead or alive. It's very serious business. It make me discover that I am the figurehead. So I must expect to be used, but not expect to be trapped.

Q: How long have you lived in Switzerland, and why did you go there?

A: I go to make Shiva and Gabriel [his young children with his Swiss wife Mireille]. I always believe in black and white. The color we get in black and white is more perfect than black and black or white and white and looking better. I like that color, it's a perfect mix. I make one first in London named Cleopatra, with curly golden hair. I make a song "Curly Locks" and I want to make kids with golden curly locks. That's why I'm in Switzerland eight years. Although I think I'm in America now to make some more children with golden locks, and curly locks. I am 62 and I am not finished yet! Sixty-two but not yet through!

Q: You do look good. How do you keep in such nice shape?

A: Physical exercise. Any kind, running, kicking. Sexercise.

Q: You know, I met you 10 years ago in London, the *Battle of Armagideon* times . . .

A: Armagideon indeed. That's when I was crazy. I was mentally crazy, I was a patient then. I stay in England three or four years then. But listen to this: Those things I tell you I have to do to Buckingham Palace, I told you I had to bring Buckingham Palace down, and didn't I do that? Right? Haha!!

Q: And now here you are in America at last.

A: Coming here at last, where they ban my passport for 17 years. So I am enjoying all of this, you understand. I am here representing my musical

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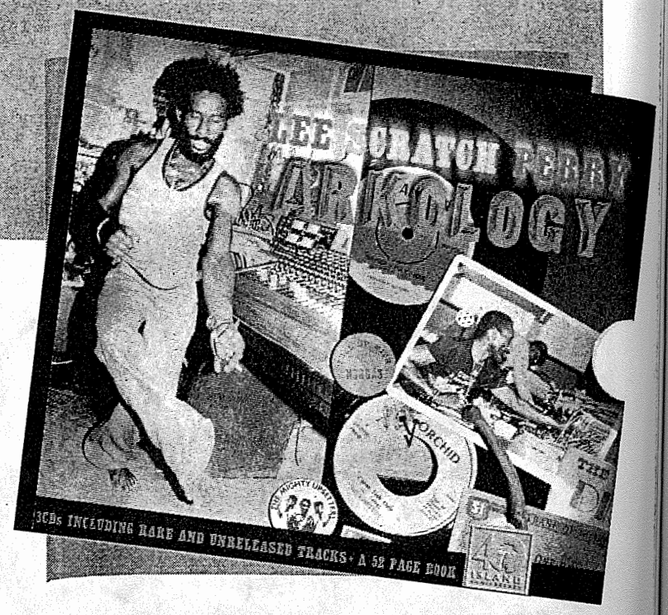
Interview by Steve Heilig

Heart of Arkology

The Lee "Scratch" Perry Box Set

EDITED BY RICHARD HENDERSON



Reggae is now another just another section in American record stores. It has become part of the furniture, declawed and user-friendly. Boom jeeps on Main Street blast dancehall and UB40 cover versions of moldie-oldies, and former Deadheads have a new rhythm to do their kelp dance to at any one of dozens of annual festivals.

Twenty years and more ago, however, reggae was immediate and threatening and compelling, an inky mystery wrapped in military surplus clothing that pushed your stereo's woofers to their limits while broadcasting a cosmology that was as weird as green milk. None of the records from that time, heard on a cd player in the '90s, can summon the alluring weirdness of that era as can the productions of Lee "Scratch" Perry. While other producers had greater career longevity and scored more hits, Scratch made his mark with a stable of singular, gifted singers, a smoking house band in the form of the Upsetters, and best of all, the inimitable sound that he crafted in his backyard studio, the Black Ark. These elements coalesced around Scratch, with his quixotic character and full-tilt work ethic, to winning effect in the years between 1973-78. It is this period, with its signature sound and seemingly limitless evidence of Scratch's ability to crank out hits on a weekly basis, that is celebrated in the boxed set compiled by Steve Barrow and Dave Katz, the long-awaited *Arkology*.

Viewed in a larger context, reggae's history in America is marked by misunderstanding and indifference. The music—aside from the albums recorded by Bob Marley after his work with Scratch—took longer to break in this country than did punk, yet its strangest variant, the beautiful mutations produced by Scratch for singers like the Heptones and Max Romeo and Junior Murvin, were among the first reggae albums to be made domestically available through Island Records. Perhaps Chris Blackwell thought that Marley's rising star would catch the Upsetter's sound in its slipstream and carry it to the masses. Maybe Scratch got a break in exchange for losing Bob Marley and the Wailers (the latter's musicians drawn from the first incarnation of the Upsetters) to Blackwell. However it happened, the wildest and most wonderful products of Scratch's home studio actually came to America in the otherwise grim mid-'70s via Island, and it is from that label's vaults that Barrow and Katz, two historians who Lord Buckley would surely have regarded as "top hubcaps," culled the tracks which comprise *Arkology*.

As I have mentioned, *Arkology*'s appearance in the summer of '97 is cause for joy and heavy reasoning among reggae fans and Upsetter trainspotters alike. Previously unheard gems vie for attention with extended single versions of old favorites, which is fine with me; the original 12" singles will soon enough be featured at Sotheby's, with only Saatchi & Saatchi able to buy them. Now Scratch's greatest sides are collated and handsomely packaged for all to hear and see. There are the makings of a hagiography here, with close-up, near-fetishistic photography of Perry's mixing board and echo unit, but first and foremost, there are the songs and sounds that were Scratch's lasting contribution to the music, which cemented his reputation for all time.

The towering significance of *Arkology* is a given, as is the fact of its freighting too much joy and i-ration for one reviewer to handle. And so, we offer the thoughts of a few of *The Beat*'s writers, the Perry-obsessed scribes who have tried time and again to trap Scratch's elusive gifts on paper, namely Chuck Foster (CF), Steve Heilig (SH), Robert Nelson (RN) and Richard Henderson (RH). We have categorized their comments and insights regarding *Arkology*, to emphasize the Upsetter's many strengths, and his ongoing appeal to those long-since lost to the thrall of the Black Ark's unique output. And now we vibrate on...

But first, some comments on the box itself, from Steve Heilig:

It's a lovely package, with a great booklet and commentary. (The letter from Scratch regarding Paul McCartney at the end is priceless!) As for the selections, were I King of Island, I might have chosen fewer dub versions and favored more original vocals, and divulged some of the rumored still-unreleased Pablo, the two Africans, and other legendary cuts, if they do in fact exist in Island's vaults. But no matter. Overall verdict: If you don't like this collection, you don't like reggae, and without this box, no reggae collection is complete, or even deep.

—Richard Henderson

The Importance of Being Scratch

Scratch the Mentor

Although many of the artists on *Arkology* did great work—like the Meditations, Max Romeo, the Heptones—before and after Black Ark, there can be no argument that Perry brought out the finest in artist after artist and some (including some not represented here) never topped records cut for Upsetter. Though his rifts with other producers and artists are the stuff of legend, his "people skills" are readily apparent. Perry got inside minds to spark creative energies many were never able to duplicate after the fire that kindled their souls smoldered in the ashes of the Ark.

—Chuck Foster

Why not start with the most obvious protege: Robert Nesta Marley. It's become reggae-tically correct to hold that Marley did his best work with the Upsetter. I must disagree: Marley truly came into his own later, and went on to higher heights. But it's indisputable that he would not have done so if not for the early formative tutelage of Scratch. As for others, well, some never again equaled what they did with Perry: Junior Byles, Junior Murvin, Prince Jazzbo, Dave Barker, the Congoes, George Faith, Jah Lion/Lloyd, Max Romeo, Bunny Clarke/Ruggs, and a host of other names and bands never heard from again. . . . Some might even add the Heptones, Meditations, maybe even the Dub Syndicate. (Need we mention Robert Palmer and Terence Trent D'Arby?)

—Steve Heilig

However bent the backing tracks may have been, with horn sections sounding like squealing brakes or distant mosquitos on a humid night, Scratch made sure that his vocalists got the red carpet treatment. Fans of the Black Ark sound invariable wonder how Lee Perry nailed all those weird sounds with his primitive gear. In a way, that has always made sense to me. The greater mystery, to my ear, is how Leroy Sibbles and his fellow Heptones, or the seductive George Faith (under-represented on *Arkology*, a minor shame) or Junior Murvin or Max Romeo managed to sound as pure and penetrating, given those same technical limitations. These vocalists and others not heard on *Arkology*, all did their best work in Perry's studio. However much he tinkered with timbre, cultivating sonic mayhem, Lee Perry obviously loved the human voice; that love is evident throughout *Arkology*.

—Richard Henderson

Every artist that passed through the Black Ark and surrendered themselves to Lee "Scratch" Perry's cabalistic production machinations was rewarded with an end result that has somehow, a generation later, become transcendent. Max Romeo's "War in A Babylon" and Junior Murvin's "Police and Thieves" have had a social and musical impact far beyond the Jamaican shores. George Faith's "To Be A Lover" was perhaps the most perfect union of Jamaican riddims and American soul ever recorded. If the Black Ark sound was ahead of its time, then that "time" is now: the late '90s; just in time for the millennium. Every Black Ark reclamation project or compilation of scarce Black Ark singles has created a frenzied interest in the productions that make the three-cd *Arkology* box set a masterpiece of timing as well as the quintessential musical chronicle of the Black Ark epoch. But let us ask another question: what about the aftermath of these artists who were "fortunate" enough to record and release titles for Perry during that time? All of the performers I mentioned earlier had subsequent careers but none of them ever reached the pinnacle of their output for Lee "Scratch" Perry again.

—Robert Nelson

Scratch the Modernist

By the time of these recordings the Upsetter was master of his own style. What he'd learned from former bosses Coxson Dodd and Joe Gibbs and contemporaries like Clancy Eccles, Bunny Lee and King Tubby was subsumed by his own experimentation, vision and collaborative powers as he riffed and was riffed off by musicians, singers and the record industry at large. His sound was moving forward not back. From this point on others would imitate him—the days of soul covers, movie themes and the American sound (despite some brilliant work with George Faith and Junior Murvin) were ending fast.

—CF

It was the 1970s. I was walking through the jungle. The air was so thick with humidity it felt like water. Lightning crashed above in the treetops while the ground below rumbled from a rolling earthquake. Birds sang in the branches while lions roared in the bush and cows mooed on the distant hillside. The only way to get through was to surrender to the primordial rhythms, which were unlike anything ever heard before out of Jamaica or anywhere else, but familiar as a heartbeat. My ears felt as if they were stuffed with smoke and mud but it all came through, amplified as if underwater. This soundtrack, obviously, could have been produced by none other than Scratch in his prime.

—SH

Lee Perry assigned "phase guitar" to properly denote R. Williams' contribution to the Heptones' *Party Time* album. About the only other person offering such imaginative and specifically programmatic credits to his players at that time was Brian Eno. The phase shifter, with its jet airplane slipstream-effect, was a relic of the psychedelic era by the time Scratch introduced it to reggae's vocabulary. The first generation of drum machines, which Perry had been recording since his *Double Seven* album, were generally viewed only as margins for tempo reference by American engineers; other than Scratch, only Sly Stone and Timmy Thomas had glimpsed the funk in their tick-tock rhythms. Then of course, there is the larger and entirely modern topic of material-reflexive art, as referenced on every track of *Arkology*. Scratch's sound was defined by its limitations. The burden that he heaped on his four-track tape machine, its record head cleaned by a swipe of Perry's T-shirt sleeve, every track loaded beyond the saturation point, at once imbued the Upsetters' wonderful grooves with an earthy crunch and echoes that from the aether.

—RH

In the Black Ark cosmology, the best way to get from Point A to Point B was certainly not a straight line. Perry was the ultimate control freak who refused to accept any limitation in musical technology, instrumentation or vocalization. He was a producer, an engineer and a mixer whose extemporaneous recording and mixing all came from his vision and muse. There was no pattern or repetitive formula. He didn't just oversee sessions, he was up to his elbows in all aspects of the recording process. As Max Romeo claims in *Arkology*'s liner notes, "Nobody knows what techniques Lee Perry used. He used a little small quarter-inch four-track tape and he seemed to get about 16 tracks stuffed into that four-track. Until today nobody knows what he did."

Perry saw no limitations to the recording. He just layered sound upon

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The Importance of Being Scratch

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sound, employing a dazzling array of echo, flange and reverb punctuated with incidental and dramatic effects. (The Black Ark "mooing cow" was even mentioned on Pacifica News as I write this review!) Out of this mix-and-match style a consistent pattern emerged that defines the Black Ark sound: a murky heartbeat of impenetrable bass, a pulsating swirl of guitar echo and a slippery hiss of hi-hat, approximating chains rattling in the dungeon, to leaven the sound. Every bit as recognizable as the contemporary mixes from Channel One, the typical Black Ark sound is exciting and foreboding at the same time.

—*RN*

Scratch the Heretic

Flying in the face of tradition often means coming in for a rough landing. If music is a type of religion, offering comfort and solace to the weary, mystical elevation to the seeker and communitas for the isolated, it can also create stultifying expectations. Rare is the master of change whose audience will follow him into uncharted regions forever. One of the things that makes the Black Ark sound unique is the subsequent destruction of the temple, the scattering of artifacts, massed forces and complete transformation of the high priest. Perry allows his myth to consume itself instead of him.

—*CF*

Lee Perry learned his craft in the houses of other masters but refused to be a serf or slave. He had to go independent to take his visions to the places he has shown us. *Arkology* documents how he filtered his muse through the fingers and voices of others. As a producer and artist on his own, he was up against many forces, including himself. How many times was his worldly success sabotaged by deception, flames, trickery? If he had agreed to work by others' rules, affected the right "look," sang the right words, might he have avoided some of the travails of his life? But: If he had bowed to convention in any way along the way, would he be among the few reggae figures deserving of a box set and all this attention? Haile unlikely.

—*SH*

I'm told that he banned Rastas from his property at one point, and I've also heard stories of the name artists who he refused to work with, despite financial incentive that would have proved irresistible to any other producer. To Scratch, a gold record was something to half-bury in the front garden, so your artists would feel better when they walked up the driveway to work. Like George Clinton of Parliament/Funkadelic fame, Perry ultimately became dislocated from the affections of his core local audience, even as he became the darling of white tastemakers in Europe and then the States. Could he care? Hell no, he'd just go to Amsterdam and record with a different band, if the muse (legal herb?) so beckoned. Of course, it was his undoing, but he hoed his own row, and there will never be sufficient reward for that.

—*RH*

Everyone loves a good conspiracy theory, but if one exists in regards to the Black Ark years it was the fact that Perry demolished the Black Ark studio in a sense of irascible frustration. There are a myriad of reasons how and why he put torch to the site of such a musical and cultural focal point of Jamaican music. That's not really as relevant as the notion that what made the Black Ark so magical was that in the half decade or so of its operation, the productions never had the time to become mundane, stale or corrupted. There was no lingering crisis of self doubt or worry about repeating oneself to torment Perry. He let it all hang out and before the well could ever run dry, he set fire to the icon he had built and walked away to fight another day. That period of six years will always be looked upon as one of the peaks in what reggae as art has accomplished.

—*RN*

The handful of Perry vocals scattered through this three-cd set include a few of his high peaks—the darkly brooding "Dreadlocks in Moonlight," the sizzling "Soul Fire" and the delightfully playful "Roast Fish and Cornbread." Though Scratch's artistry is everywhere apparent in the production, the singer, whose early works were often in the nature of personal attacks and whose later wild dada ramblings resemble the novels of Celine in their curmudgeonly vituperation, comes off here as something of an innocent, perhaps closer to the mark than his innovative and enchanting body of work might at first lead you to believe.

—*CF*

Scratch the Artist

Overshadowed commercially by his proteges, Scratch has never received his due as a "solo" artist. From the Black Ark days and *Arkology*, taste "Roast Fish and Cornbread." See "Dreadlocks in Moonlight." Touch "Curly Locks." Feel "Soul Fire." And then, once Scratch was liberated from the weight of his own creations, dissolve into the 1980s *Battle of Armagideon* and *Time Boom X De Devil Dead* solo masterpieces. Then try to name another reggae artist with more individuality, range, contributions and committment than the Upsetter hisself. Not possible: I rest my case, and it is a case closed.

—*SH*

Scratch's writing credits are thick on the ground, yet his actual contributions to the process (lyrics? riffs? drum patterns?) are as hard to pin down as those of his closest American counterpart, the Svengali producer of the girl-group era, Phil Spector. Yet any session helmed by either Spector or Perry, certainly those leading to *Arkology* in the case of the latter, yielded songs whose author can be identified from the first note. Clearly, there is more to songwriting than notes on a staff, and Scratch mastered all the intangibles of that craft. That, and he kept up his chops as a vocalist. His own single "Roast Fish and Corn Bread" is perhaps the best gestalt of what made the Black Ark special, a nursery rhyme gone wrong set to a slow-motion Rube Goldberg mechanism where ship's bell (A) hits the bass guitar riff (B), causing it to roll along hi-hat pulse (C) into wah-wah guitar (D), which rings ship's bell (A)...

—*RH*

Perry's attention to words and phrases are just as integral a part of what made the Black Ark such a success. A quick wit who based much of his lyrical content on casual observances and seemingly randomly rhymed couplets, he brought songs and song fragments to singers and taught them how to sing each one with as much deft skill and exactitude of any Brill Building arranger. His willingness to work in tandem with his charges as teacher, coach and class clown made his sessions relaxed and enjoyable. No one who recorded at Black Ark kept one eye on the studio clock. Perry recorded and mixed without time constraints until each mix was just right. His attention to musical detail, lyrical relevance and precise vocalization has more to do with methodology than mythology.

—*RN*

Scratch the Charismatic

When Groucho Mark created, then inhabited, a fascinating persona no one called him crazy. They called him Groucho. Like Oscar Wilde or Alfred Jarry, Perry made art from life and those whose life is artifice at best find it hard to forgive him for enjoying it. *Arkology* shows Perry putting the final touches on the character he created, the personality (from the Greek *personare*, or mask), he constructed for his particular dance with the world. With these tracks he built not only legend but his greatest body of work, evincing the ability to mold music and musician, sense and sound.

—*CF*

"I am not a record producer, I am a scientist." So sayeth Scratch in 1997. But what is science? Webster's: "Possession of knowledge as distinguished from ignorance or misunderstanding." He has been ignored and misunderstood, but Scratch's laboratory is somewhere between his ears and within his heart. There is knowledge there. If you experryment enough, some light must be shone on reality. He hasn't needed dreads, neither fame nor fortune. Is there any doubt about his sincerity, his conviction, even as his muse leads him far and wide? "I was crazy once" he told me, looking me straight and seriously in the eyes. Now he says he has found himself again, and I do believe he, and only he, knows the difference.

—*SH*

When Jeremy Marre, the English documentarian, arrived at the Black Ark to film Scratch at work for his 1977 film *Roots, Rock, Reggae*, he found a song in progress, "Play On, Mr. Music." Though it was never issued to my knowledge, the footage of the vocals being tracked by Junior Murvin, the Heptones and the Congos—shoulder to shoulder, in one go!—is mesmerizing. Obviously the session had been convened on short notice, and the song cobbled together more quickly still. Amazing, that Scratch made this happen, and had those vocalists singing as one in his room. Still more amazing, his recruiting the Diamonds and the Meditations to sing backing vocals for George Faith, on the latter's *To Be A Lover*. Beyond amazing, that he convinced Gregory Isaacs to sing backup for the Congos (much less anyone). Amazing. Obviously, there was a considerable magnetic field emanating from Scratch's place in Washington Gardens.

—*RH*

The six years represented by *Arkology* will always be looked upon as one of the peaks in what reggae as art has accomplished. The legacy it leaves popular music only shrouds Lee "Scratch" Perry in legend coupled with the towering level of respect such adulation usually commands. In a nutshell, the most logical answer to why most artists never replicated their heightened success at Black Ark is that they didn't get a chance to return to the Ark for more recordings. It was probably taken for granted that the Black Ark would always be there and with hindsight, of course, we know how that wasn't the case. That fact makes the output of this era all the more captivating. Yet after observing all that Lee "Scratch" Perry put of himself into each recording, this is a case of genius well earned.

—*RN*

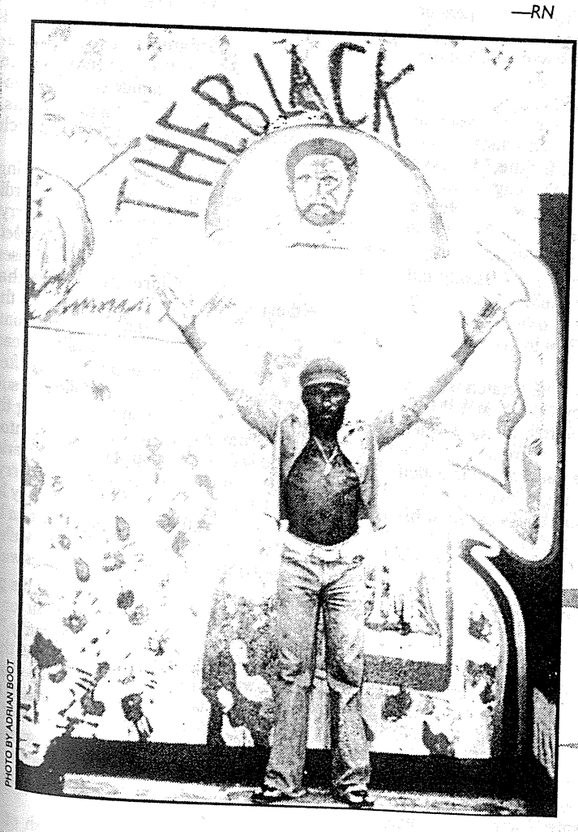
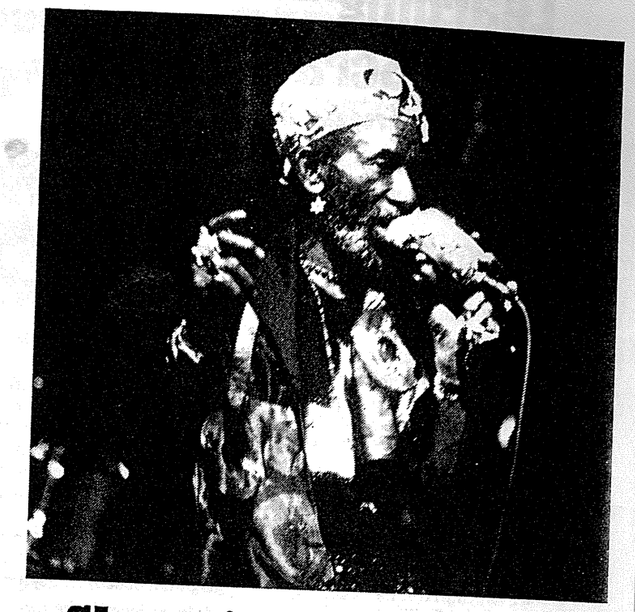


PHOTO BY ADRIAN BOOT



Showtime

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government, because I have now declared myself the President of the 13th State of America. I say to the American lady with the torch in her hand, dig my dub real down deep in San Francisco. The reason for me to be here is to take over this country because it's now Perrymerica. I come to change it to Perrymerica. In plain words: I am the Collie Man that they ban for 17 years out of America. And this president now return to America to be President Abraham Lincoln Rainford Hugh Perry Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie I Music Magical!

Q: It is good to see you are now so well. What are your plans for the future?

A: Hah hah hah. If you are not laughing I am not satisfied. I love to give the people what they want. I can give you whatever you want. I can be your handyman, but if you are careless I can be your candyman and I will take away your wife, hah hah hah. My plan now is to create love dub music, teaching a new way of rocking and singing and being, a new way of making hearts. They try to ban ganja man for 17 years in the USA and nothing did improve for 17 years here since ganja was banned. Nothing goes down for 17 years, all the presidents disappear. You have one little laughing president he laughs about everyting now. Because he don't even know what is right or what is wrong. So all you have to do is keep on laughing and so I too keep on laughing. So now I will sing this song: [singing] Keep on laughing . . . [Pause]: Present president who?

Q: Clinton.

A: OK. [Begins singing, slowly and soulfully]

Keep on laughing, President Clinton
keep on laughing, President Clinton
for you can't take the wet out of the water
and you can't take the heat out of the fire
so keep on laughing. President Clinton
keep on laughing, in your coffin
I am laughing
for I escape out of the mud hut
and out of the put put
and I am flying over the White House
where I keep all the president white louse
I am standing on the president's White House. ★

Learning From Scratch

The history of reggae, dub, soul, and "meggae," as told by Lee "Scratch" Perry

By Joshua Green

SF Weekly November 19–25, 1997

It's 3:30 a.m. in Paris, and Lee "Scratch" Perry is living up to his reputation as one of reggae's most colorful, and least stable, characters. "My real name is Death Before Dishonor," he announces over the phone in a gruff, wizened voice. "There is nothing I cannot do. That's the name of my sword — Excalibur. Also, I have a genie lamp as well, and genie rings. I believe in genie. And my genie is ganja, collie weed, marijuana, lamb's bread, sensimillia."

Obviously, Perry and his genie have spent a lot of quality time together over the years. But to discount Perry's efforts as a singer, producer, engineer, and talent scout because of his obsession with Jamaica's favorite export, or for any of his abundant idiosyncrasies, would be as screwy as one of Perry's own rants. It's quite possible that he's raving, barking mad, but as folks like Edgar Allen Poe and Vincent Van Gogh have demonstrated, lunacy is not always an impediment to artistic greatness. That's true in Perry's case, at least. Island Jamaica/Chronicles recently issued *Arkology*, a generous box set of Perry's mid-'70s productions that makes a strong argument in favor of declaring him one of reggae's true innovators — and yet it surveys only a small portion of his remarkable oeuvre.

Perry's tendency to answer in sweeping, often confusing parables can test the patience of even the most sympathetic journalist, but it's also part of his charm. Perry frequently rhymes his response or suddenly breaks into song or laughter. But even when he's thundering Old Testament-style threats and pronouncements, there's always a thread, however cryptic, that can be traced back to his story, and to the music that's made him a legend.

Perry's real ambition was to become a vocalist. "Tried to sing with Dodd, but he didn't like my style of singing," he recalls. "He think it wasn't good enough. He never really paid me much mind."

Perhaps not, but Perry launched a successful career in Jamaican music anyhow. As Dodd's Downbeat enterprise grew to encompass more than one rig, Scratch was given his own mobile sound system to operate. His ability to identify the next smash (or, as he puts it, "me knowin' what would drop") paid off when he started singing chart-toppers of his own. One ska hit from that era — 1965's "Chicken Scratch" — provided his most enduring nickname.

Perry broke with Dodd, unamicably, in 1966. It was the first of his many volatile breakups with producers and artists. "I was with him long time, 'nuff time," he says about the split. "Now I'm going to do my own thing my own way. I wanted to do something different from what Coxsone was doing. He was makin' rock steady and ska — and I didn't want to make rock steady and ska. I wanted to make soul-rock-disco-pop-techno. Everything all in one." He also felt that Dodd didn't want him to become a producer in his own right.

In the years that followed, Scratch teamed with Joe Gibbs, Clancy Eccles, and Prince Buster, a one-time rival from the days when Perry took musical potshots from his mobile DJ unit. Each of these collaborations ended badly, with Scratch angry over a lack of money and recognition, but because of his burgeoning talents, top artists still kept showing up at his door. Bob Marley was one of them.

Marley and his group, the Wailers, enjoyed numerous ska successes during the mid-'60s, including the Dodd-produced Studio One smashes "Simmer Down" and "Love and Affection." But because the players received few of the royalty payments they were due, they broke up in 1966, with Marley moving to the States and taking a job at a Chrysler factory in Delaware. A few months later, Marley returned to his homeland and reunited with the Wailers, but they soon became disenchanted with Dodd, their former producer, and turned to Perry for help.

Perry shared the Wailers' frustration with Jamaica's political and musical climate, as well as their sense that Rastafarianism provided the best hope for black Jamaicans. He was also committed to helping the group reclaim its rightful position atop Jamaican playlists.

His visionary plan: Perry mated the Wailers with his studio band, the Upsetters, and completely revamped their sound. The Wailers' traditional ska/rock-steady harmonizing was ditched in favor of lead vocals by Marley and backup crooning by Peter Tosh and Bunny Wailer. Perry did away with horns — which he viewed as outdated and too celebratory in the context of the Wailers' rectitude — and accentuated the songs' refrains, underlining Marley's staunch Rastafarian lyrics.

The results of this tinkering were spectacular and extraordinarily influential; on the Perry-produced records (*Soul Rebels* and *African Herbsman*, released years before the albums that would make Marley an international star) the music slowed down, brandishing more ominous beats and a thematic focus on dreadlocked revolution. Immediately thereafter, other Jamaican reggae artists followed suit. But despite Perry's role in transforming the Wailers from a stagnant ska combo into a group poised on the cusp of stardom, Marley and company did what so many of Perry's protégés have done over the years. They left — and Perry's still sore on the subject. In his opinion, much of the notoriety the Wailers achieved after moving to Chris Blackwell's Island firm was built on the backs of his productions, but he never received credit for his contributions. "I make the reggae party," he maintains. "Not even Bob Marley was there when I was writing 'Funky Reggae Party.' And I see my name not even on it, much less people know I am the writer, creator of the rhythm." But, he adds, "too much ragamuffin and too much dread was in the party. So I crumble the reggae party and I start a dub revolution party."

Dub, an instrumental outgrowth of reggae, was not invented by Perry; if anyone conjured up the style, in which the bass and vocal tracks of a reggae tune are broken apart and radically modified, it was producer King Tubby. But Scratch, who encouraged Tubby to open the Waterhouse studio, where dub began to evolve, can't quite bring himself to agree. "King Tubby was learning from Lee 'Scratch' Perry the Upsetter," he states. "But there is none that can upset the Upsetter, for the Upsetter upsets better ... yeah."

Although Perry and Tubby joined forces on one of dub's earliest triumphs, 1973's *Black Board Jungle Dub*, they generally favored drastically different approaches: Tubby preferred carefully crafted spatial and sonic deconstruction, whereas Scratch was drawn to phasers, reverb, samples, and all things bizarre. For a time, Perry was so determined to explore the outer reaches of dub that he refused to work with anything so mundane as a singer.

Black Ark, a studio Perry built in the yard of his Kingston-area house, became Scratch's dub fountainhead. When he speaks of the site, his words become murky and mystical. "I mix in my brain, for my brain is perfect," he stresses. "My brain is on the road of perfection ... I am Jacqueline and the son of Lord Thunderblock, Black Ark studio. I am the only original. I do not copy. I only imitate God. I don't imitate bad. Neither would I imitate Bob, nor would I rob. I scorn robbers and kill them with thunder. When Lee 'Scratch' Perry shit, his enemies die. And when he speak, they die" — he suddenly emits a loud quacking noise — "just like that."

As far as anyone can tell, no actual deaths took place at Black Ark between 1975 and 1979, but plenty of reggae stereotypes perished. As can be heard on *Arkology*, Perry seemed to invent new ways of merging dub and popular reggae every time he entered the studio. He literally pulled singers off the streets, and his knack for matching them up with head-spinning backing tracks was unparalleled.

His quirks were, too. He decorated Black Ark's gate with electric toasters because, he then told the inquisitive, "I *am* a toaster." Shortly thereafter, he hollowed out a portion of the studio's dirt floor to make a duck pond, upon which he laid a plank to support a drum riser. In addition, he covered every inch of wall space with cryptic graffiti that he later altered by painting X's over all the A's and E's. . . . . when the Black Ark burned to the ground. . . . .

Perry was arrested on suspicion of arson, but was released three days later because of a shortage of evidence. Ever since, reggae aficionados have debated the question of his guilt or innocence in the matter. Some speculate that the conflagration started after Perry unwisely ignored hustlers who demanded that he pay protection money. Others claim that he committed the act in order to stave off the unwanted advances of a German tourist. Others point to Perry's eccentricities; his excessive use of pot and rum was well known, and he was reportedly seen walking backward and striking the ground with a hammer for two full days before the blaze. But when asked about the incident today, Perry offers another explanation.

"I burned it down because I built a dread studio, and I am not a dread," he says. "I build a dread creation and promise a dread situation. Then I remember that I am not a dread. So why did I build a dread creation? I was trapping myself."

Put another way, Perry was beginning to resent being cast in the shadows of artists he put on the map in the first place.

"I thought I was buildin' up the Lee 'Scratch' Perry studio," he allows. "But it wasn't the Lee 'Scratch' Perry studio. It was the Bob Marley studio and the dreads' studio, and the Congos', the Meditations', Max Romeo's studio. I was creating a dread thing that was too dreadful for me. And I didn't remember that I was a soul man. I thought I was dread. So after I remove it, I remember that I am a soul man."

For a while, Perry all but disappeared from the reggae scene. Bizarrely, he resurfaced in Zurich, Switzerland and married a minor royal in a Hare Krishna ceremony. Before long, he set up a studio that he calls "my extraterrestrial laboratory" — a term he seems to mean literally. "In Jamaica, I was depending on the blacks and make Black Ark," he offers. "They takes all the tapes of everything. But before they get the Ark, I burn down the Ark, and then I'm not depending on the blacks anymore — I'm depending on the extraterrestrials."

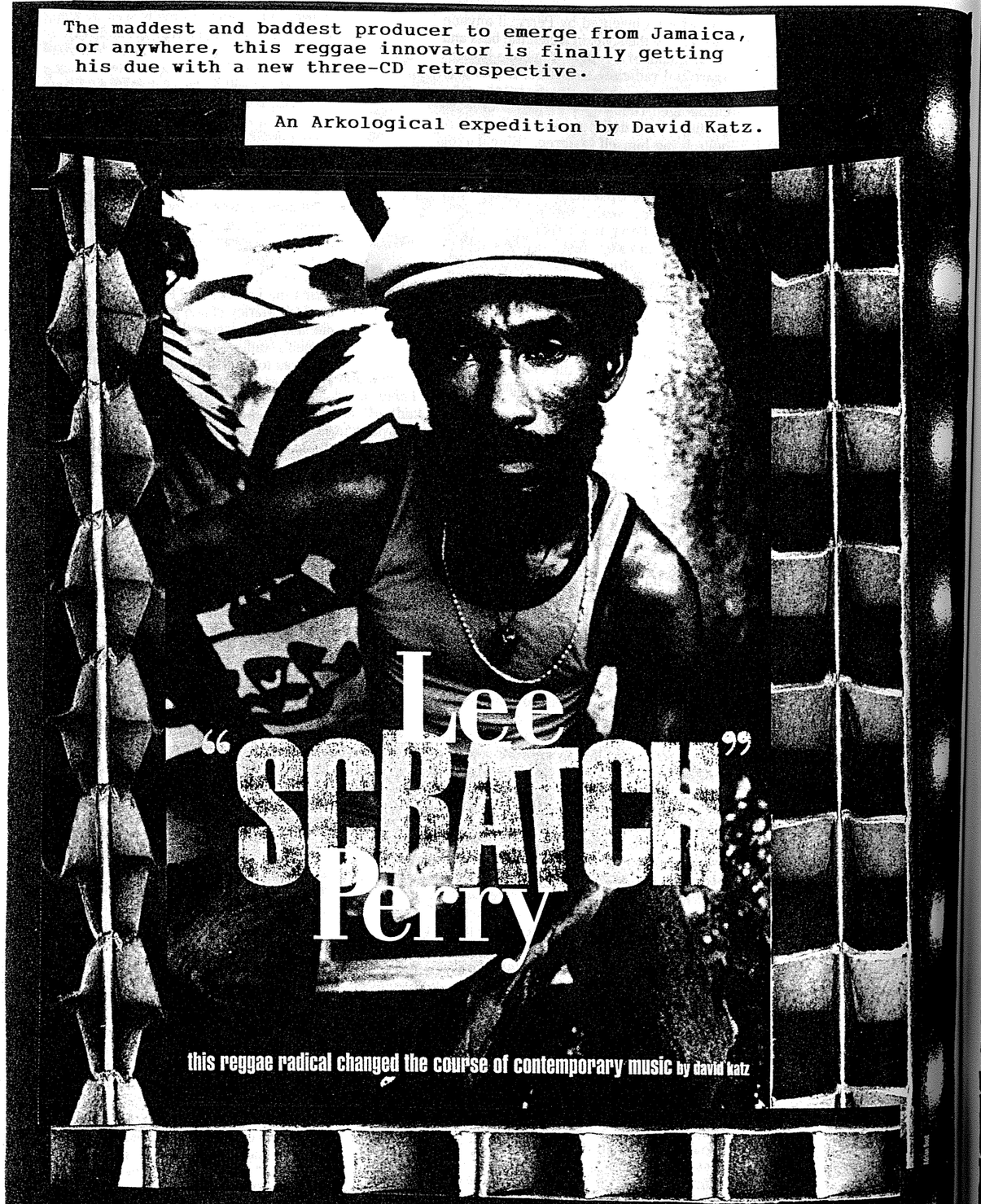
Also assisting Perry is Mad Professor, a contemporary dub genius in his own right. The two have helped each other on a series of projects for the RAS/Ariwa imprint, including the upcoming disc *Dub Fire*. Predictably, Perry's description of the latter is curious but intriguing. "It's something real heavy," he asserts. "It's like a megaton. It's heavier than reggae; it's called 'meggae.' It take and make reggae look like it's small. Put that reggae into reincarnation — so reggae pray and clear the rain, for I am coming with the meggae. Dub 'President of Fire' Perry with Mad Professor and the Robotic — heavier than lead."

In the meantime, Perry is looking forward to his return to San Francisco where last year's rare show at the Maritime Hall left a decidedly positive impression on him. "I am the real Peter Pan, and they are all my jungle fans," he says of that crowd. "So I know the plans and I give them my song, and my song is heard from the east to the west, from the north to the south, from the North Pole to the South Pole. As Father Christmas I come with their presents and say 'You are on my side, welcome to heaven!' "

What on earth is Perry talking about? Even he might not know — but he knows who he is. "It is I," he exclaims, "in the name of one love, Jah Rastafari — his one and only son, Lee 'Scratch' Perry: the upsetting, blazing ball of fire." SF

The maddest and baddest producer to emerge from Jamaica, or anywhere, this reggae innovator is finally getting his due with a new three-CD retrospective.

An Arkological expedition by David Katz.



Lee "SCRATCH" Perry

this reggae radical changed the course of contemporary music by david katz

He's a musical shaman and sexual magician, a devout Rastafarian who believes in extraterrestrials. He advocates black supremacy and a theocratic government but lives with a wealthy white woman in Switzerland. Producer, singer, songwriter, painter, sculptor and walking performance-art piece, Lee "Scratch" Perry brings new meaning to the word "unique."

Scratch may be a mass of contradictions who skates the fine line between genius and insanity, but his body of pioneering musical work has made him a permanent fixture of the genius zone. So much hearsay circulates about the man that separating fact from legend is impossible, but what Perry has done for reggae has yet to be equaled by any other producer or artist, and the influence of his production skills on a range of contemporary styles cannot be underestimated.

With Island Records recently issuing *Arkology* (a three-CD box set of the apex of Perry's output), and with Perry headlining major music events in London, New York and San Francisco, Scratch is back in the limelight.

Lee Perry's career spans virtually the whole history of modern Jamaican dance music; in many ways, its story is his story. His passport says he was born in 1936, but Perry himself usually puts the date one year earlier. Growing up in Jamaica's rural northwest, he found money and opportunity scarce, and left school at 15 to try his hand at dominoes and dance contests.

Jamaica's North Coast was being developed for tourism in the mid-1950s, and Perry briefly worked as a bulldozer driver in Negril before moving to Kingston to enter the music business. He approached sound-system giant Duke Reid, who promptly showed Perry the door. Undaunted, he went to Reid's chief competitor, Clement "Sir Coxsone" Dodd, who Perry says was being intimidated by Reid, a former policeman and liquor store owner with a strong-arm reputation.

Beginning as little more than Coxsone's errand runner, "Little" Lee soon controlled Dodd's Downbeat sound system and acted as talent scout and auditions supervisor. He brought the Maytals to Dodd's attention and co-wrote songs for Delroy Wilson and Shenley Duffus. Ultimately, Perry left Coxsone because "justice" was not forthcoming: Dodd was not only ripping him off financially, he also undervalued his vocal talent (although he did record Perry singing "Chicken Scratch," from which he got his nickname).

By 1967, Perry was working with Prince Buster on songs like "Judge Dread," a massive hit in which the violent "rudies" get their due. Next he teamed up with Clancy Eccles, a tailor and singer who had a shop beneath Buster's premises; then Perry got a job with Joe Gibbs and recorded his signature song, "The Upsetter." His dissatisfaction with Gibbs' business practices led Perry to form Upsetter Records in 1968 with partners Lynford Anderson and Barrington Lambert.

The first Upsetter release was a sappy cover of "Place in the Sun" by David Isaacs, who later led the Itals. "Barry and me put the money up, because Perry didn't have any," Anderson recalls.

Despite poor sales, Perry bounced back with "People Funny Boy," a landmark recording that forever changed the emerging reggae beat. "One night he say, 'Let me buy you a drink,'" remembers Anderson, "so we stopped at this bar close to my house, and there was a church there. The church was doing revival stuff when we were drinking. When we left, Scratch starting rocking. They had this real band with drum and bass and guitar and everything. The next day Lee Perry said, 'I've got the idea for a song.' He came to the studio and did the song; it sounded very good. 'People Funny Boy,' that's a revival of a Pentecostal church."

Perry followed with a string of uptempo organ instrumentals, hits like "Return of Django" and "Man From M I 5" that made an impact in Jamaica and abroad. His success led to the establishment of the Upsetter record shop, a musicians' hang-out in the heart of downtown Kingston.

Perry's first recording crew, known as Gladdy's All-Stars, later became the backing band for Toots and the Maytals. By late 1969 the Upsetters session band was led by bassist Aston "Family Man" Barrett and his brother, drummer Carly Barrett. "Any musicians me use, they call them 'Upsetters,'" Perry explains. "At them time me used to have Jackie Jackson [bass] and Hux Brown [guitar], Hugh Malcolm [drums], and then after a while, play it fi everybody—everybody music sound the same way. So then me want a different set of musician, so Barrett them come; them was young, and they wanted to do something. Me let them do something how me wanted to do it, and it sound different from the set of musicians me used to use before and call them the Upsetters. So me call the Barretts now the Upsetters, 'cause them was with me now. And then Bob (Marley) come in, and he want to work."

Perry restructured the sound of Bob Marley and the Wailers, bringing them to international prominence in 1970. He collaborated on some of the Wailers' most powerful early work—"Duppy Conqueror," "Keep on Moving," "Mr. Brown" and "Small Axe"—and produced several of Marley's strongest later songs, including "Jah Live," "Punky Reggae Party," "Blackman Redemption" and the still unreleased "Who Colt The Game."

Behind the mixing board, Scratch applied techniques that were shocking and extreme. His radical experiments were beyond the grasp of his competitors, his visionary approach well ahead of his time. From his earliest productions, he showed an enthusiasm for "versioning" and a love for non-musical sounds. By the early 1970s, long before the emergence of the sampler, Perry was using cut-up techniques, literally splicing two songs together.

He started working with studio wizard King Tubby, experimenting with sound effects on a number of versions, including the dramatically phased "Three Times Three," a cut on Max Romeo's *Three Blind Mice*. Later, the two would collaborate on the immortal *Blackboard Jungle Dub*, one of the first and best dub albums ever issued.

Perry felt limited in the studios of others—Randy's, Dynamics or the newer Channel One—and built his own Black Ark studio in 1974. There he recorded a variety of musical styles, including novel and exciting work by young DJs like Dillinger, Prince Jazzbo and James Booms, as well as spaced-out jazz from trombonist Vin Gordon and melodica virtuoso Augustus Pablo. Some of the heaviest music ever recorded in Jamaica would emerge from the Ark over the next two years, much of it religious in nature. From 1976-78, Island records issued some of Perry's greatest productions.

among them Jah Lion's *Colombia Colly*, Max Romeo's *War In a Babylon*, the dub collection *Super Ape*, the Heptones' *Party Time*, Junior Murvin's *Police and Thieves* and George Faith's *To Be a Lover*.

But Island held back other product, including the Congos' debut album and Perry's own *Roast Fish Collie Weed and Corn Bread* and *Return of the Super Ape*. The Congos disc has subsequently been issued at least seven different times, selling an immediate 20,000 copies when rereleased by Blood and Fire in 1995. According to Congos vocalist Roy Johnson, Island "have meeting for about a month straight, who [they] was to put the promotion on, if it was Bob Marley or the Congos."

Max Romeo recalls a similar attitude by the company towards his own Perry-produced work: "They sign all the artists that was a threat to Bob Marley and put them on the shelf so they can send the king ahead. We were all victims, and we were all sacrificed to make the Marley empire. We thank God for it, because the world would hear reggae music."

Now Island has taken belated steps to right some of the wrongs with the compilation of the three-CD retrospective set *Arkology*. I consider it an honor to have been involved in the selection of tracks and the writing of the liner notes together with Steve Barrow. We were also thrilled to unearth previously unissued material. Through unreleased tracks and alternate takes of favorite hits, *Arkology* truly celebrates Perry's art.

Despite his unbridled creativity, Scratch began to experience forces of negativity. Drinking rum and smoking ganja even more heavily than usual, he let his family and professional life fall into disarray. Unsavory characters began to frequent the Ark, and local gangs extorted money from him.

Perry's situation called for drastic measures. As Max Romeo recalls, "He put a pound of pork on his [car] antenna and rode around town until it rotted and decomposed and maggots were falling from it, claiming that he don't want no Rasta round him because Rasta come give his kids lice. This was around '78. He had this Rastafarian Church he started with a bunch of dreads, but these dreads fall out of grace, so he wanted to keep them off him. After he put the pork on the antenna, the dreads was still coming, so he wrote on his car back, 'I am a batty [gay] man.' That's when the dreads run in all different directions! Anyhow, his situation continue a little further with the game. This was a nice car he had, a Pontiac. He took the bonnet off, put flower pots in—planted flowers and driving around. The dirt lodges in his carburetor, the car can't go no further, so he put it on fire and walk away from it, and from there he went to the studio and just start burning. He was Doctor Fire then, you know? He just decided to kill the whole bloody place."

Perry covered the walls of the Ark with graffiti directed at former business associates, crossing out all the *A*'s and *E*'s. Some say he burned the Ark by accident; others say he did it to foil his enemies. In any event, the Ark was destroyed and Perry detained briefly by police.

Without Black Ark, Perry has been a captain without a ship. Island advanced him a large sum of money to rebuild the studio around 1980, but he is said to have squandered it on jewelry, recording his next album at Compass Point. Two Americans based in Holland tried to get the Ark up and running in the early 1980s, bringing European artists to record there at Scratch's request and eventually bringing Perry to Amsterdam for voicing. But the album they were working on was not completed and was eventually issued as *The Return of Pipecock Jackrson* without Perry's sanction.

"A lot of people say Scratch is mad," notes Max Romeo. "In my mind, Scratch is not mad. Scratch is on a heights that he choose to be, and he wants to keep people off him."

Perry worked in America with white reggae bands the Terrorists and the Majestics before relocating to England in 1983. In the late 1980s, he successfully collaborated with Adrian Sherwood and Mad Professor, and laid some tracks with his old boss Coxsone Dodd, with whom he is currently reported to be engaged in a protracted legal battle. In 1989 he moved to Switzerland and has since divided his time between Zurich, Kingston and London, recording more albums with Adrian Sherwood, Mad Professor and Niney the Observer. He has also produced his own material in Switzerland and recently collaborated with Yello's Dieter Meier. In the 1990s he fathered two children with Mireille Campbell, the former mistress of a leading Swiss politician, whom Perry married in 1989 at a Hare Krishna temple. Scratch also traveled to Japan with the Beastie Boys, recording with a Japanese musician in Tokyo.

In recent years Perry's behavior has become increasingly bizarre and unpredictable. He has developed his own cosmology and talks perpetually in rhymes and riddles. Many have felt that his post-Ark work has lacked elements of creativity that marked his Jamaican output. Although his European and American efforts are very different from his Jamaican work, it is worth pointing out that we mere mortals are only now beginning to understand recordings he made 20 to 30 years ago.

Meanwhile, a foolhardy debate continues over Scratch's sanity. "A lot of people say Scratch is mad," notes Max Romeo. "In my mind, Scratch is not mad. Scratch is on a heights that he choose to be, and he wants to keep people off him. He's very capable. That guy, he's an old guy, and he's as young as the youngest guy. He stand on one foot and use his toe, touching his forehead. He's just in a heights that a lot of people don't understand."

The amazing body of work that Scratch has put together is a testimony to his creative vision. When we consider what Perry has achieved so far, it's clear that he is one of the few who genuinely deserves the title of living legend. Let us simply accept the man as he is and acknowledge his eccentric genius.

Lee 'Scratch' Perry
Return of The Upsetter

BY DOUG WENDT

Lee "Scratch" Perry, a.k.a. The Upsetter, got his start in Jamaica as a producer under the tutelage of Sir Coxsone Dodd in 1959. By the late '60s, Perry had his own Upsetter label and a house band by the same name, composed of drum and bass wizards Carlton and Aston "Family Man" Barrett. He soon took the Wailers—Bob Marley, Peter Tosh and Bunny Livingston—under his wing and, with the Barretts' help, changed the sound and direction of reggae forever. Perry's highly creative yet eccentric approach provided a dark edge to the Wailers' smooth style. From 1969 to 1978, he put his stamp on Marley's music. He produced *Soul Revolution* ('69), *African Herbsman* ('73) and *Escape from Babylon* ('75), and helped craft such classics as "Kaya," "Duppy Conqueror" and "Lively Up Yourself." "I think Bob's best tracks are the ones that Lee Perry produced," Island Records founder Chris Blackwell acknowledged.

Perry opened his own Black Ark Studio in 1974, but would burn it down four years later. By the early '80s, he had moved to Amsterdam, and spent the decade touring Europe. Today, the 61-year-old reggae pioneer is married to a Swiss baroness and lives near Geneva. He spoke with HIGH TIMES at Maritime Hall in San Francisco, where he made his West Coast debut last April. A live album from that engagement is available on 2B1 Records (450 Harrison St., #310, San Francisco, CA 94105). *Arkology*, a three-CD set of Perry's music, was recently issued by Island Records.

HIGH TIMES: Will there ever be an Upsetters band reunion?

LEE PERRY: There won't be any more Upsetter Band. I once planned the Upsetter Band. The Upsetter was so upsetting that it upset even I. They wanted to take over the whole thing. They was upset and they become Wailers. So I give them all the things that wail and upset them and put all that is upsetting away. I put their alcohol away. I put their rum away. And I put their massive dreads away. They were all too dreadful for me. Anything that is upsetting me I must get rid of, that's why I'm the Upsetter. I must not be upset.

Are you rebuilding the Black Ark Studio?

I did want to, but I discover it will bring back the destruction that was around me. And even death. My power is to stay alive—not to encourage death. So the Black Ark Studio won't be coming back neither. Anything that is a problem to me, my object is to put it away, get rid of it. I don't care how powerful it was, even if it was the power of the world, it have to go.

How did dub music begin?

Everyone who started a particular music, you must have heart. Your heart must start go boop-boop, boop-boop. That's the beat of the drum. You have a brain. It go tick-tick, tick-tick tock, that's the bass. Your brain, that's your bass. Your heart is your drum. So you study. You create with your drum 'pon your heart. Is a clean, perfect heart. Make sure your heart is not corrupted because what you send out come back to your heart. If you send out love it will come back to your heart. And if you send out hate it will come back to cut your heartstrings. You can have guitarists around and pianists around if they are not confusing. But as far as I'm concerned, I prefer only to have the bass and drum. Other musicians can join in and do their little thing, jus' don't confuse me.

Did you see Haile Selassie when he came to Jamaica in 1966?

I am the mystic warrior of His Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie I. Why did he send I to Jamaica before him? To clear the way for him. I don't look anyways to see him, Emperor Haile Selassie. Because I know where he is. He never die. He said, "To the mudhut, shazam!" And there was a streak of lightning. And if the mudhut did not shazam he would say, "Presto Change-O," and maybe there wouldn't be any more Africa. But he didn't want to do that. He is the only king that have the power to jump over flesh. And he don't want to grow old. Emperor Haile Selassie cannot grow old. He is King Tut—the uncommon king.

You ask if I did see him when he come to Jamaica. Yes. He sent me to prepare the way. Because he come to Jamaica to crumble the cocaine brain. You understand? I was in Jamaica creating a musical brain called "It's a Punky Reggae Party." Somebody want to change it into "It's a Cocaine Party." And because I didn't want to be in the cocaine party, me and His Majesty Haile Selassie disappear without the cocaine party. So I was in Jamaica, knowing that he was coming to crash somebody's brain, but it wasn't mine. So I was there preparing the way for him to crumble the cocaine brain. And to kaput the cocaine plane.

What inspired your last CD, *Who Put the Voodoo 'Pon Reggae*?

What inspired me is that some of us are unbalanced and for us to get balanced we'd have to go on track. So we create a big boom like a big dance track for the people to follow. It wasn't meant to be called reggae. I didn't have a name for it at the time, but the government wanted to call it reggae. So something go mix up, through money. And because something go mix up, I don't want to have anything to do with the name reggae. But whomever love it I will bless them and say take it. I don't want to have nothin' to do with it for reason more than one. God bless you for loving the reggae, but I don't want to discuss anything about it. See, I'm following Emperor Haile Selassie's footsteps. He didn't give Egypt for nah reason, he give it up and I have to give away reggae for a reason as well. I don't want to

be a kaput. OK? I send you a prophet and the music would not save the life of the prophet.

Are you talking about Bob Marley?
If you say so. I didn't say so. I said I send you a prophet. If the reggae didn't save him, how is it going to save me? The people love reggae and I love reggae still. I don't hate reggae and I don't want you to think I throw away reggae. I love reggae. It become a giant and cannot be controlled anymore. 'Cause of the force that it bring upon me, I have to burn the Black Ark Studio and leave Jamaica. Otherwise I wouldn't be here. They want my reggae tapes. When you are alive you are nothing, but when you are dead you is worth something. So I was supposed to be dead and be a legend, then my reggae tapes would sell more.

When were you born?
On a Friday, which is a payday—the money day. And the date was 20th of the third, 1-9-3-6. So because I was born on the 20th of the third, 1-9-3-6, I know that three-six are out there making trouble. So demand the power of the three-six, take away the three-six, have the three-six tricked, trick the three-six, wrap up the three-six, have it well mixed in my master mix. And take away the power of the archbishop and the council of the churches and the heads of government. And take away the power of the International Monetary Foundation, take silver from Wall Street and Capitol Hill.

I don't care what happen or what people say. I am going to do what I think I here to do, what the spirit say to do as well. If they think I rule the wind and I can change the weather, let them think so. Then I will rule the weather and change the weather.'

Do you remember the first time you smoked herb?
It make me feel real glitzy and I don't know what's happening. I want to say it took me on a trip, a strange trip. And I was no longer on this planet Earth. It take me into space and I want to come out of it. And I get out of it. I afraid of it and I want to say whatever it is, I try it again. But the trip was nice. It teach me wisdom, knowledge and understanding, and put me back down on the planet Earth to stand on solid ground. You say whatever you want. You ask the Earth because the Earth have all the powers. If you think Earth didn't have the powers, how did Earth grow the trees and the plants and the flowers? And how does the Earth feed the animals? So then he send me back to Earth after the trip to understand that the Earth is the lord. Then if you want or need anything, why don't you knock and ask the Earth?

SCRATCH SMOKES AT MARITIME HALL IN SAN FRANCISCO (1997).
MARISHA ALEXANDER

'Green herbs. Green collie herbs, green marijuana herbs, green ganja herbs—it's just the green Genie you talking about. Yeah, the Genie exists and the green ganja collie is the Genie. The green Genie Godeenie! He makes the wind blow, the grass grow. The tree of life—ganja! Hallelujah. Jahovia. Jah Rastafari.'

So herb was a revelation?
And the revolution.

What's the difference between Jamaican herb like Lamb's Bread, Goatshit and so forth?
Sinsemilla. Lamb's Bread. Cannabis. Collie. Marijuana. Tampi. Any name it have it is the same. It just named herbs. The herbs. Green herbs. Green collie herbs, green marijuana herbs or green ganja herbs—it's just the green Genie you talking about. Yeah, the Genie exists and the green ganja collie is the Genie. The green Genie Godeenie! He makes the wind blow, the grass grow. He makes the school bell ring and the children sing. He makes the church bell ring and the people sing. The tree of life—ganja! Hallelujah. Jahovia. Jah Rastafari.

You wrote a song called "Bushweed Corntrash." What's that?
Well, people used to feel a different vibration off the weed. The weed we normally did plant, we didn't maintain properly or give good treatment to turn into a good smoke, so it become a bush weed. It didn't get any mental support. So they put it with corn trash and smoke it as one vibration. What you put in, you get out. You didn't give anything, so it become bushweed. And you put it with corn trash and you smoke it. And say it was fucking up your brain.

Isn't Goatshit an especially strong herb?
Goat shit. Rat shit. Cow shit. Horse shit. Not dog shit or bull shit. 'Cause dog shit and bull shit is very poisonous. 'Cause those two eat dead meat more than anything else.

So you don't recommend those as fertilizers?
No dog shit. No bull shit used as fertilizer. Human shit is the richest fertilizer. Even though they scorn their shit they don't know that their shit is the richest fertilizer. And they don't know that their piss is the greatest healer.

What was the idea behind the song, "Herb Vendor"?
Me get a message from a different planet to deliver down here to the Earthlings. I extraterrestrial it to the Earthlings. I make it on music so the Earthling can hear this message. [*Sings lyrics from "Herb Vendor"*] Dub it Iyah. Dub it Iyah. Yeah. Hit the collie. Hit the collie 'til it swell you head now. Do it Iyah. Do it Iyah. Yes!

How's the herb in Switzerland?
It's OK and I think they don't fight against herb. They don't put herbs amongst the drugs. They don't rate herbs like drugs. Put herb always above that. Think about that.

What's your favorite way to ingest it?
Tea. And I smoke.

How do you make the tea?
You put on the tea and boil up a quarter leaf, which is like the tiny amount you put in your teabag in hot water. Take it out and shake it out and hang it for another time. You don't just throw it away—maybe use it seven mornings straight. And if you think all the juice is out, put it away to dry. And when it dry, go on and smoke it.

How do you rate California herb?
It need a little more fertilizer, like maybe cow shit. It need a little more mixed in. It want a touch up. So get in the field and mix it up with something nice, like maybe a little sugar some time. And salt. The people not treating the Earth right. They only take from the Earth and not give anything back. But the Earth make you know that your body need a little sugar, a little salt. When you just plant something there and expect to get the best from it and give nothing to the Earth—Ooooh! Come on! Give 'em a likkle milk too, why not? Collie plant: a little sugar, a little salt, a little milk, like a baby. Why don't you give me a portion of the best for my sample at the secret laboratory?

Is that a flaming sun leaf on your shirt?
Fire, yes. Sparkling fire. Fire revelation. Fire mean the revelation of a prophecy.

And fire burned down the Black Ark Studio you built.
Yeah. Fire come as a witness again.

This had to do with Island Records turning down your album *Roast Fish, Collie Weed and Cornbread* when you were at the height of your powers.
That album. That's what caused every fucking thing.

And then a couple of years later you released *Judgment in a Babylon* with Chris Blackwell on the cover as a vampire.
When he fight against *Roast Fish, Collie Weed and Cornbread* it did create power. What else could I call it but judgment? I couldn't call it justice. If I call it justice I would have killed him instantly. You understand? But that would be against the rules of the cosmic laws. You have the cosmic laws and the cosmic energy. The cosmic energy don't want you to do that because the watcher want to watch. And if you spoil the watcher's fun and the watcher don't watch 'til the end, the watcher will charge you for spoiling the watcher's fun.

Do you think government forces targeted Bob Marley?
Of course.

And you like to take a low profile.
Yeah, while they switch plan. Because they will plan to bring up Satan from out of the ground, under the Earth. But I the Sandman say, "No, Satan won't come up." We're gonna allow Satan to come up to the neck and hold Satan with the sun and the quicksand and choke Satan. He cannot go up or down unless Satan agree to I and I terms. You wrap him up with three leaves.

Last night at your show you said, "Are you deaf? I will make you deaf." Why do you want to make people deaf?
I will make them undeaf. I mean, if you are closed I will make you unclosed. And if your brain is unclosed I will open your brain and open your mind and open your heart, open all your parts! Then if you open your past with your ears so you're hearing, I come through your past and give you a present into your future. Through your ears I speak. Could you hear me if you're not havin' the ears on? If you could not hear, then you could not hear me. And if you could not see, then you could not see me, could you?

We can shut our eyes, but can't shut our ears. Our ears are always open.
Always open. Even when you dream. Even when you have vision you hear something else sing.

You often make references that you're crazy or you're eccentric. I think you know you're not really crazy. You use it as a way to keep people at bay. Isn't that what's really going on?
Look, I'm surrounded with people with wasted brain. And when I send out my beam, my scannin' beam, and go into their wasted brain and see no part of the wasted brain that I require, I'm bored! But when I scan the brain and see brain that are not wasted, brain that can be put to work or put to use to bring forward a creation—takes in life, the circle of life and the circle of light—I would really be interested in it. Then I won't be bored.

When Paul McCartney got busted in Japan for herb, you sent a telegram to the Minister of Justice in Tokyo in which you said Paul's possession of a quarter-kilo was not excessive. Is there any kind of excessive amount of herb?
Listen, the amount of herbs he want to carry, even if he have a planeload of herbs, he would have to be set free. You understand?

You wrote: "I find the Herbal powers of marijuana in its widely recognized abilities to relax, calm and generate positive feeling a must. Master Paul McCartney's intentions are positive." Herb is the healing of the nation, right?
Yeah! And the herb send the music.

And that's why they fight it down.
The music is the shepherd. ✱

SUPER SCRATCH

Album

Discography

1969-1997

- **PRODUCTIONS**
- **SOLO RECORDINGS**
- **COMPILATIONS**
- **RE-ISSUES**

Lee Perry has been making records for more than 30 years as an artist/producer/engineer. Many of his records have been released with different mixes on different labels. I have listed the labels that are most readily available. The following discography only compiles albums and CDs. Perry has also released hundreds of singles (see David Katz's "The Upsetter" magazine for comprehensive coverage).

Since 1993 over 30 albums have been released bearing Lee Perry's name. Releasing and reissuing Scratch material has grown into a cottage industry and sorting through the enormous back catalogue is almost impossible. Some of the more recent compilations are of suspicious origin and the quality varies tremendously. As well as providing a chronological listing of his collaborations, this discography attempts to separate genuine Lee Perry from the imposters and uses the following key:

(HR) Highly Recommended
(R) Recommended
(?) Questionable Lee Perry Involvement
(??) Probably Not Lee Perry
(???) Definitely Not Lee Perry

LEE 'SCRATCH' PERRY — ALBUM DISCOGRAPHY

1969

THE UPSETTER (TROJAN)
RETURN OF DJANGO (UPSETTER UK)
CLINT EASTWOOD (PAMA)

1970

SCRATCH THE UPSETTER AGAIN (TROJAN)
THE MANY MOODS OF THE UPSETTER (PAMA)
EASTWOOD RIDES AGAIN (TROJAN)
SOUL REBELS w/ THE WAILERS (TROJAN)

THE GOOD THE BAD AND THE UPSETTERS (RHINO) (??)
... Perry denies having anything to do with this record

1971

SOUL REVOLUTION w/ THE WAILERS (TROJAN)

1972

SOUL REVOLUTION II (MAROON/TROJAN) (HR)
... instrumental version of SOUL REVOLUTION, essential listening
BATTLE AXE (TROJAN)

1973

CLOAK AND DAGGER (BLACK ART)
AFRICA'S BLOOD (TROJAN)
AFRICAN HERBSMAN w/ THE WAILERS (TROJAN) (HR)
... repackaging of 1970 material featuring a couple of Bob Marley productions
RHYTHM SHOWER (UPSETTER)
BEAT DOWN BABYLON w/ JUNIOR BYLES (TROJAN)

1974

RASTA REVOLUTION w/ THE WAILERS (TROJAN)
... repackaging of 1970 material
BLACKBOARD JUNGLE DUB (UPSETTER) (HR)
DOUBLE SEVEN (TROJAN) (R)
SILVER BULLETS w/ THE SILVERTONES (TROJAN)
TO LOVE SOMEBODY w/ BUNNIE SCOTT (KLIK)

1975

KING TUBBY MEETS THE UPSETTER AT THE GRASSROOTS OF DUB (STUDIO 16)
REVOLUTION DUB (CACTUS)
DIP PRESENTS THE UPSETTER (DIP)
KUNG FU MEETS THE DRAGON (DIP)
RETURN OF WAX (DIP)
MUSICAL BONES w/ RICO AND THE UPSETTERS (DIP)
SUSAN CADOGAN (TROJAN)
NATTY PASSING THROUGH w/ PRINCE JAZZBO (BLACK WAX) (HR)

1976

PARTY TIME w/ THE HEPTONES (MANGO) (R)
COLOMBIA COLLY w/ JAH LION (ISLAND) (HR)
WAR INA BABYLON w/ MAX ROMEO (ISLAND) (HR)
SUPER APE (ISLAND) (HR)
ROAST FISH COLLIE WEED AND CORNBREAD (UPSETTER) (HR)

1977

TO BE A LOVER w/ GEORGE FAITH (MANGO) (HR)
POLICE AND THIEVES w/ JUNIOR MURVIN (ISLAND) (HR)
HEART OF THE CONGOS w/ THE CONGOS (BLACK ART) (HR)

1978

RETURN OF SUPER APE (UPSETTER)
BEST DRESSED CHICKEN IN TOWN w/ DR. ALIMINTADO (GREENSLEEVES)
... features several Perry productions
FROM THE HEART OF THE CONGO w/ KALO KAWONGOLO and SEKE MOLENGA (SONODISC) (HR)
... a number of different versions were released on various labels, the CD version was issued by RUNNETHERLANDS in 1993

1979

SCRATCH ON THE WIRE (ISLAND) (HR)
... a compilation of material produced in 1976/77/79

1980

RETURN OF PIPECOCK JACKXSON (BLACK ART)
BEST OF LEE PERRY AND THE UPSETTERS, VOLUME ONE (PAMA)
... re-release of CLINT EASTWOOD
ITAL CORNER w/ PRINCE JAZZBO (CLOCKTOWER) (HR)
... re-release of NATTY PASSING THROUGH

1981

THE UPSETTER COLLECTION (TROJAN) (R)
... produced 1969-73
LOVE THY NEIGHBOR w/ RAS MICHAEL AND THE SONS OF NEGUS (JAH LIFE INTERNATIONAL)
... re-release on the Live and Learn label (1983) is not the Perry mix, but a re-mix

1982

BEST OF LEE PERRY AND THE UPSETTERS, VOLUME TWO (PAMA)
... re-release of THE MANY MOODS OF THE UPSETTER
SCRATCH AND COMPANY - CHAPTER ONE (CLOCKTOWER)
HEART OF THE ARK, VOLUME ONE (SEVEN LEAVES)
HEART OF THE ARK, VOLUME TWO (SEVEN LEAVES)
MYSTIC MIRACLE STAR (HEARTBEAT)

1983

MEGATON DUB, VOLUME ONE (SEVEN LEAVES) (HR)

1984

MEGATON DUB, VOLUME TWO (SEVEN LEAVES) (HR)
REGGAE GREATS - LEE PERRY (MANGO) (R)
... collection of material produced in 1976/77

1985

THE UPSETTER BOX SET (TROJAN)
... three albums: AFRICA'S BLOOD, DOUBLE SEVEN, and the rare RHYTHM SHOWER
HISTORY, MYSTERY, PROPHECY (ISLAND)
SOME OF THE BEST (HEARTBEAT)
... featuring cuts from 1968-74

1986

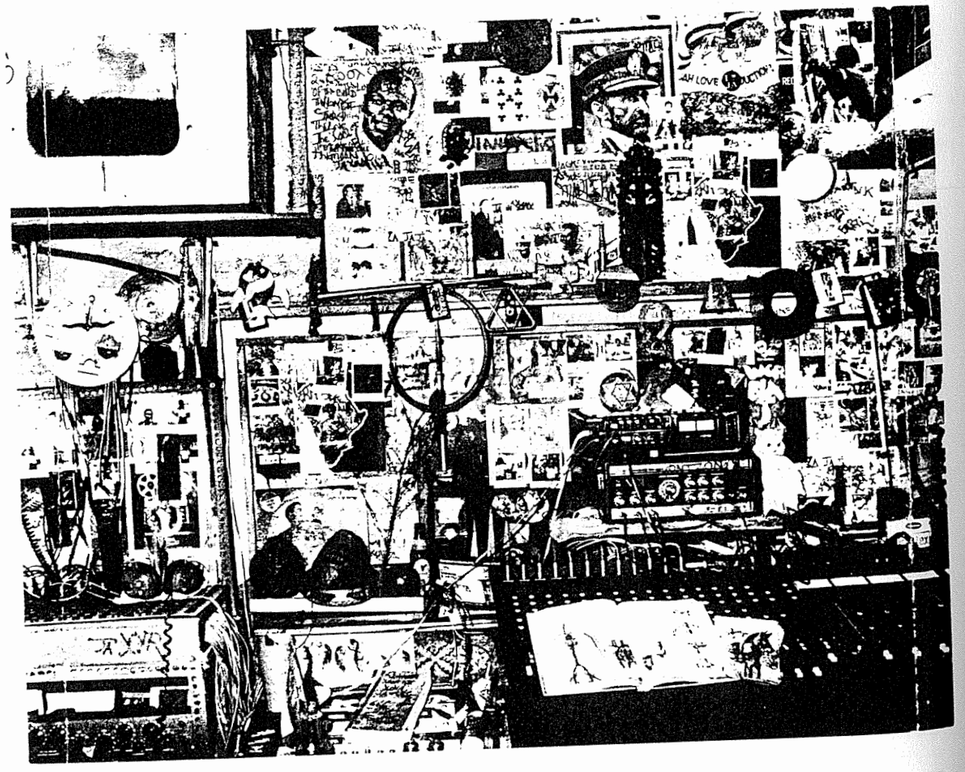
BATTLE OF ARMAGIDEON (MILLIONAIRE LIQUIDATOR) (TROJAN) HR

1987

BEAT DOWN BABYLON: THE UPSETTER YEARS w/ JUNIOR BYLES (TROJAN)
TIME BOOM X DE DEVIL DEAD w/ DUB SYNDICATE (ON-U SOUND) HR

1988

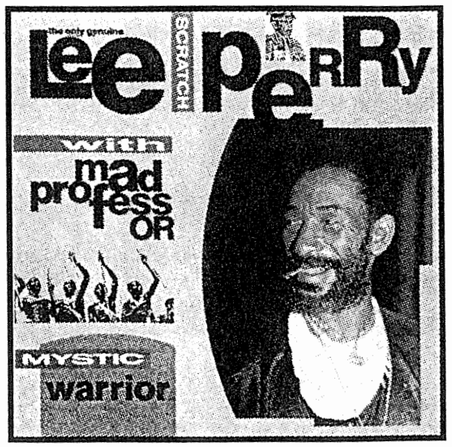
WHEN WILL BETTER COME w/ JUNIOR BYLES (TROJAN)
... side one produced by Lee Perry between 1972-76
THE REGGAE TRAIN (1968-71): JOE GIBBS AND FRIENDS (TROJAN)
... features several Perry productions including "The Upsetter"
PAY IT ALL BACK, VOLUME TWO (ON-U SOUND)
... Perry is featured with Dub Syndicate on one track "Train To Doomsville"
SCRATCH ATTACK (R.A.S.)
... re-issue of BLACKBOARD JUNGLE DUB and SCRATCH AND COMPANY - CHAPTER ONE on a single CD
SOUL REVOLUTION, PARTS ONE and TWO w/ THE WAILERS (TROJAN)
... re-released as a double album

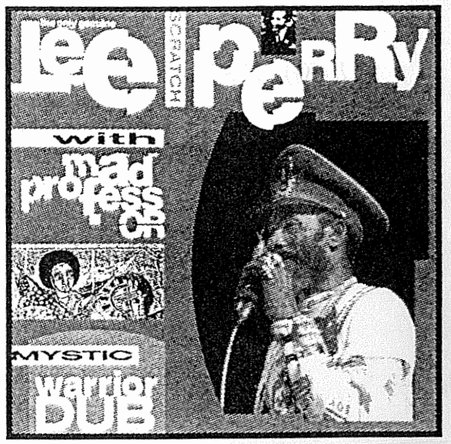


1989

SATAN KICKED THE BUCKET (ROHIT)
GIVE ME POWER (TROJAN)
... produced 1973-76
CHICKEN SCRATCH (TROJAN)
... 1964-66 material
MAGNETIC MIRROR MASTERMIX (ANACHRON) (R)
... a compilation of mid-70s Black Ark releases including classic 12 inch single "Bafflin' Smoke Signal/Captive"
TURN AND FIRE (DISCO DUB) (ANACHRON)
SHOCKS OF MIGHTY (ATTACK)
... tracks from 1969-74
EXCALIBURMAN (SEVEN LEAVES)
BLACK ARK IN DUB (STARLIGHT)
MYSTIC WARRIOR w/ MAD PROFESSOR (ARIWA) (R)
MYSTIC WARRIOR DUB w/ MAD PROFESSOR (ARIWA) (R)
OPEN THE GATE (TROJAN) (R)
... featuring Lee Perry and friends, the second triple album box set from Trojan's vaults includes various rare Jamaican twelve inch mixes recorded at Black Ark in the late 70's
ALL THE HITS (ROHIT)
... compilation of early singles

SENSI DUB (REVOLVER) (??)
... although he receives an engineering credit, there is no discernible Perry input
REMINAH DUB (ORIGINAL) (?)
... featured on one side only; not representative
SENSI DUB, VOLUME TWO (ORIGINAL) (??)
... probably not Lee Perry





1990

LEE PERRY MEETS BULLWACKIE IN SATAN'S DUB (ROIR)
PUBLIC JESTERING (ATTACK)
VERSION LIKE RAIN (TROJAN)
... produced 1972-76
BUILD THE ARK (TROJAN)
... another triple album box set of rarities from the second half of the 70s
FROM THE SECRET LABORATORY (MANGO) (R)
... featuring Dub Syndicate and Roots Radics
SPIRITUAL HEALING (BLACK CAT)
BLOOD VAPOUR (LA)
... recently discovered 1976 sessions

MESSAGE FROM YARD (ROHIT) and
THE DUB MESSENGER (TASSA) (?)
... two of the very worst recordings bearing Perry's name; it is hard to believe he had anything to do with these releases
LEE PERRY MEETS THE MAD PROFESSOR IN DUB CHAPTER ONE (ANGELLA) (???)
LEE PERRY MEETS THE MAD PROFESSOR IN DUB CHAPTER TWO (ANGELLA) (???)
... no sign of Lee Perry on these two anonymous recordings

1991

OUT OF MANY, THE UPSETTER (TROJAN)
PAY IT ALL BACK, VOLUME THREE (ON-U SOUND)
... Perry is featured with Dub Syndicate on one track "You Thought I Was Dead"
NEWSFLASH (ESOLDUN)
... appears to be same tracks as ROHIT'S ALL THE HITS
LORD GOD MUZICK (HEARTBEAT)

1992

THE UPSETTER AND THE BEAT (HEARTBEAT)
LEE PERRY MEETS MAFIA AND FLUXY IN JAMAICA (ESOLDUN) (?)
... purported to be 1976 session
STAY RED (ESOLDUN)
FULL EXPERIENCE w/ AURA (BLUE MOON)
... twelve inch EP of previously unreleased 1976 sessions
THE UPSETTER RECORD SHOP, PART ONE w/ THE WAILERS (ESOLDUN)
... the complete 1969 SOUL REBELS
THE UPSETTER RECORD SHOP, PART TWO w/ THE WAILERS (ESOLDUN)
... early 70s rarities
SOUNDZS FROM THE HOTLINE (HEARTBEAT)
PEENI WAALI (SHANACHIE)
... Perry is featured on one track "Licht and Stein"

1993

LEE PERRY PRESENTS: THE JOLLY BROTHERS CONSCIOUS MAN (ROOTS)
... re-issue of late 70s production
UPSETTING THE NATION: THE UPSETTER AND FRIENDS 1969-70 (TROJAN)
ECHOMANIA w/ DUB SYNDICATE (ON-U SOUND)
... vocals on two tracks
PHOENIX OF PEACE w/ EARL SIXTEEN (SEVEN LEAVES) (?)
HOLD OF DEATH (RHINO-UK)
HEAVY MANNERS (REGGAE BEST series) (ESOLDUN)

1994

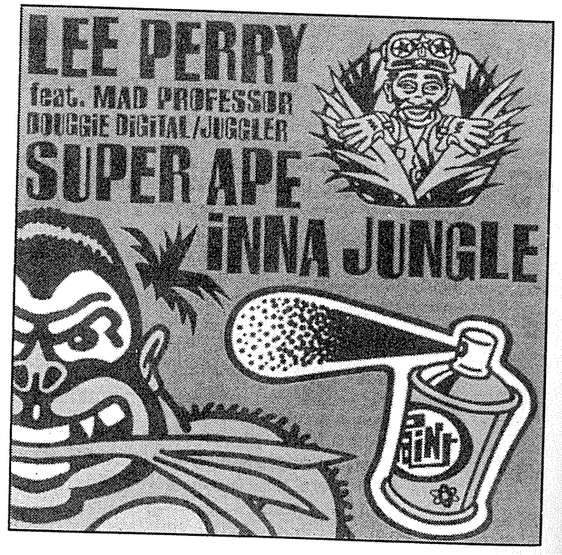
LEE PERRY AND KING TUBBY IN DUB CONFRONTATION (ESOLDUN)
SMOKIN' (V.P.)
PEOPLE FUNNY BOY (TROJAN)
"ORIGINAL" BLACKBOARD JUNGLE DUB (ORCHID)
CLASSIC SELECTION VOLUME THREE WITH DUB SYNDICATE (ON-U-SOUND)
... vocal on first track only

LEE 'SCRATCH' PERRY AND THE UPSETTERS MEET AT KING TUBBY'S (RHINO-UK) (??)
... doesn't sound like Lee Perry made it to the meeting
GUITAR BOOGIE DUB (RHINO-UK) (???)
... credited to Lee Perry but actually Bunny Lee
LEE PERRY PRESENTS GREGORY ISAACS (RHINO-UK) (?)

1995

BLACK ARK ALMIGHTY DUB, CHAPTER THREE (STARLIGHT)
... a.k.a. MEGATON DUB VOLUME THREE
THE QUEST (ABRAHAM/CLOCKTOWER)
GLORY DUB (ESOLDUN)
SCRATCH THE UPSETTER AGAIN/EASTWOOD RIDES AGAIN (TROJAN)
... re-release of embryonic material, two albums on one CD
KUNG-FU MEETS THE DRAGON (JUSTICE LEAGUE) (R)
... re-issue of 1975 album, with a couple of extra tracks
LARKS FROM THE ARK (NECTAR MASTERS) (R)
SUPER APE INNA JUNGLE w/ MAD PROFESSOR (ARIWA)
... Perry's and Mad Professor's take on jungle/drum and bass is worth checking out
BLACK ARK EXPERRYMENTS w/ MAD PROFESSOR (ARIWA)
EXPERRYMENTS AT THE GRASSROOTS OF DUB (ARIWA) (R)
DUB CONFRONTATION VOLUME TWO w/ KING TUBBY (LAGOON)
THE UPSETTER MEETS THE UPSETRESS IN DUB AROUND THE WORLD (SPRINT)
ROOTS AND SOCIETY w/ KING TUBBY (REGGAE BEST)
INTRODUCING LEE PERRY (CARRIBBEAN RECORDS)
REGGAE'S GREATEST HITS VOLUME THREE (HEARTBEAT)
... a budget repackaging of 1985's SOME OF THE BEST

UPSETTERS A GO GO (HEARTBEAT) (???)
... recorded without Perry's involvement



1996

HEART OF THE CONGOS w/ THE CONGOS (BLOOD and FIRE) (HR)
... re-release of classic 1977 album as two CD set with several extra tracks including rare "Congoman/Congoman Chant" twelve inch
VOODOOISM (PRESSURE SOUNDS)
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT w/ DUB SYNDICATE (ON-U-SOUND)
... vocal on two tracks
THE BEST OF LEE PERRY (SPIRIT RECORDS)
DUB-NET PHILOSOPHY (FOTOFON)
DUB CHILLOUT (MUSIC CLUB)
... a budget compilation featuring 3 Lee Perry tracks
WHO PUT THE VOODOO 'PON REGGAE? (ARIWA) (R)
DUB TAKE THE VOODOO OUT OF REGGAE w/ MAD PROFESSOR (ARIWA) (R)
WORDS OF MY MOUTH w/ VARIOUS ARTISTS (TROJAN) (HR)
... excellent compilation of material originally released between 1973-1975
BUNNY LEE & THE AGGROVATORS AGGROVATE LEE PERRY AND THE UPSETTERS (RHINO-UK)
RASTAFARI LIVETH ITINUALLY (JUSTICE LEAGUE)
THE REGGAE EMPEROR (RHINO-UK)
THE GREAT LEE PERRY - KING OF DUB (HIT SQUAD)
... only two Lee Perry tracks

SCIENTIST UPSET THE UPSETTER (HIT SQUAD) (???)
... not Lee Perry
PRESENTING DUB (RHINO-UK) (?)
THE UPSETTER & THE STUDENT (RHINO-UK) (?)
THE KING OF DUB (HIT SQUAD) (???)
... actually a re-issue of DUBBING WITH THE OBSERVER which is by King Tubby and Observer All Stars
LEE PERRY THE UPSETTER MEETS SCIENTIST AT THE BLACKHEART STUDIO (RHINO-UK) (???)
... actually Scientist dubs
LEE PERRY AND THE UPSETTER MEETS SCIENTIST AT BLACK ARK STUDIO (GRAPEVINE) (?)
... mostly Bunny Lee dubs

"The Black Ark Presents Rastafari Liveth Itinually"
The Upsetters and various artists
(Ravensquire Limited)

A flood of **Lee Perry** material, while it can't exactly be called new, is newly available. ***Lee Perry and the Upsetter Meet Scientist at Black Ark Studio*** could just as easily have been called *Scientist Meets the Aggrovators at Bunny Lee's Brother's House*. It's only about three-fourths of the way through—the last three songs in fact—that feature that thick Black Ark/Hippy Boys underwater sound only Perry could achieve. For the most part fairly un-experimental—though sturdy—'70s dub. *[Ernie B]*

ALBUM DISCOGRAPHY 1997

Upsetter in Dub (Heartbeat)

Technomajikal (ROIR)

ARKOLOGY (Island)
...1975 to 1979 - prime Black Ark material
compiled by Steve Barrow, David Katz & Trevor Wyatt

"Original Super Ape" (Charm/Jetstar)
..."Return of..." plus five tracks compiled by
Pauline Morrison and Omar Perry Jr.

Live At Maritime Hall (2B1 Records)

Musical Bones (Justice League)
...re-issue of a 1975 DIP album

Megawatt Dub: King Tubby Meets Lee Perry (Shanachie)

Tibetan Freedom Concert (Grand Royal)
...various artists: Lee perry, Mad Professor and
Robotiks feature on "Heads of Government".

Corrections: ALBUM DISCOGRAPHY 1969-1996

Cloak and Dagger (1973) was first issued on UPSETTER (JA) and RHINO (UK). The BLACK ART pressing is a Dutch re-issue.

Musical Bones (1973) features Vin Gordon (a.k.a. Don Drummond Jr.)not Rico.

Best Dressed Chicken (1978) no Perry productions but he does engineer a few tracks.

Love Thy Neighbour (1983) the Live & Learn re-issue is also a Perry mix but features three different tracks.

Blood Vapour (1990) almost certainly not Lee Perry

Reminah Dub (1989) does not feature Lee Perry

The DUB ALCHEMIST at work. Mists of smoke from a thousand spliffs swirl around SCRATCH as he leaps up from the mixing board shouting and gesticulating, rapping the glass partition to the studio below. "Rolling, rolling" he shouts to no one in general. As the tape rolls the band starts . The thin tape of the 4-track TEAC takes the over-driven signals and acts as it's own compressor, the tape saturated with the low frequencies of the bass and the highs from the hi-hat. The guitar is distorted but that's alright. The sound is more important than the meters. Through the mist a projector shines images on the wall, people watch, people listen. SCRATCH sprays disinfectant and drinks from the next bottle of stout. He claps his hands and shouts, he smiles.

The mixdown session pumps the huge bass sound out of the large speakers hanging in the corners. SCRATCH is animated, his left hand routing the sound through the Mutron Phaser, his right hand punching tracks in and out. Phasing, delay, echo, the swirl of parametric covers whole mixes. SCRATCH is up, he's down, he stumbles across someone eating seated on a chair against the righthand wall.The air-conditioner blows cold air but it feels so hot in the room, full of the sweet aroma of herb mixed with the sweat of people deep in concentration. Another success, not calculated, just some sorcery of natural origin that comes with the action of doing.

(Chris Wilson, from the liner notes to "UPSETTER IN DUB")

21 JANUARY 1980

ARK OF THE COVENANT
5 CARDIFF CRESENT DR.
KINGSTON, JAMAICA
AIR WHITE SMOKE SIGNAL
EARTH MOON BASE
JUDA ONLY LAW HOUSE
ISREAL LIGHT HOUSE

MINISTER OF JUSTICE
1-1-1 KASUMIGASEKI
CHIYODA-KU
TOKYO, JAPAN

Dear Sirs,

I LEE PIPECOCK JACKSON PERRY would LOVE to express my concern over your consideration of one quarter kilo to be an excessive amount of herbs in the case as it pertains to master PAUL McCARTNEY.

As a creator of nature's LOVE, light, life and all things under the creation sun, positive feelings through songs, good times and no problems. I find the Herbal powers of marijauna in its widely recognized abilities to relax, calm and generate positive feeling a must.

Herbs is his Majesty's. All singers positive directions and liberty Irrations. Please do not consider the amount of herbs involved excessive.

Master PAUL McCARTNEY's intentions are positive.

BABY BLUE GREEN STAR
PIPECOCK JACKSON
LEE "SCRATCH" PERRY
BANNANA EYE I PEN JA
NATURES LOVE DEFENDER

copies of this telegram courtesy of Black Star Liner bv.,

(reprinted from "ARKOLOGY" booklet)

" Heads of government you are charged with sacrilege.

Heads of government you are charged with public jestering.

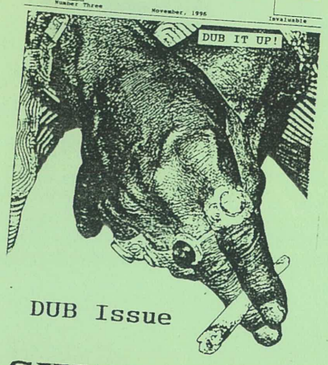
How do you plead, guilty or not guilty ?

I find you guilty and sentence you, heads of government, to poverty and famine and hardship and bad luck.

Bye bye Hypocrites ! "

SCRATCH

Number Three — November, 1996 — Invaluable



DUB Issue

T-SHIRT

'Super Scratch' is the best of strictly ltd edition Scratch Fanzine Issues 1-4 This Ripe t-shirt design features the cover of Issue 3.

ORDER HERE

☐ Scratch T-Shirt @ $20*
- ☐S ☐M ☐L ☐XL ☐XXL
- ☐ light grey marl
- ☐ unbleached
- ☐ white

☐ Super Scratch 5 tape set @ $30*

*includes postage in Aust

Send to:
RIPE
PO BOX 5969
WEST END
Q 4101

Buyers of the Super Scratch Fanzine should keep their address fresh with RIPE for news of SS Vol 6 & for free issue of the annual bio update.

SUPER SCRATCH VOLS 1-5 (set)

The 'Super Scratch' cassette series is an attempt to collect all of Lee Perry's non-album projects chronologically from 1968 to 1990.

Gathered over 25 years of Scratch collecting, these 420 minutes of pure Lee Perry madness/magic are a real quality reproduction off master tape onto TDK SA's. At cost price - a labour of LOVE.

****

ripe

Limited Edition :02 of 12

PEACE